

The Pilot and his Wife eBook

The Pilot and his Wife by Jonas Lie

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Page 1

Title: The Pilot and his Wife

Author: Jonas Lie

Release Date: April 8, 2005 [EBook #15588]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** Start of this project gutenberG EBOOK the pilot and his wife ***

Produced by Clare Boothby, Jim Wiborg and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

THE PILOT AND HIS WIFE

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN OF

JONAS LIE

BY

G.L. TOTTENHAM

William Blackwood and sons
Edinburgh and London
MDCCCLXXVII

THE PILOT AND HIS WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

On the stern, pine-clad southern coast of Norway, off the picturesquely-situated town of Arendal, stand planted far out into the sea the white walls of the Great and Little Torungen Lighthouses, each on its bare rock-island of corresponding name, the lesser of which seems, as you sail past, to have only just room for the lighthouse and the attendant's residence by the side. It is a wild and lonely situation,—the spray, in stormy weather, driving in sheets against the walls, and eagles and sea-birds not unfrequently dashing themselves to death against the thick glass panes at night; while in winter all



communication with the land is very often cut off, either by drift or patchy ice, which is impassable either on foot or by boat.

These, however, and others of the now numerous lights along that dangerous coast, are of comparatively recent erection. Many persons now living can remember the time when for long reaches the only lighting was the gleam of the white breakers themselves. And the captain who had passed the Oxoe light off Christiansand might think himself lucky if he sighted the distant Jomfruland up by Krageroe.

About a score of years before the lighthouse was placed on Little Torungen there was, however, already a house there, if it could be dignified by that name, with its back and one side almost up to the eave of the roof stuck into a heap of stones, so that it had the appearance of bending forward to let the storm sweep over it. The low entrance-door opened to the land, and two small windows looked out upon the sea, and upon the boat, which was usually drawn up in a cleft above the sea-weed outside.

When you entered, or, more properly speaking, descended into it, there was more room than might have been expected; and it contained sundry articles of furniture, such as a handsome press and sideboard, which no one would have dreamt of finding under such a roof. In one corner there stood an old spinning-wheel covered with dust, and with a smoke-blackened tuft of wool still hanging from its reel; from which, and from other small indications, it might be surmised that there had once been a woman in the house, and that tuft of wool had probably been her last spin.



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There sat now on the bench by the hearth a lonely old man, of a flint-hard and somewhat gloomy countenance, with a mass of white hair falling over his ears and neck, who was generally occupied with some cobbling work, and who from time to time, as he drew out the thread, would make some remark aloud, as if he thought he still had the partner of his life for audience. The look askance over his brass spectacles with which he greeted any casual stranger who might come into the house had very little welcome in it, and an expression about his sunken mouth and sharp chin said plainly enough that the other might state his business at once and be gone. He sought no company; and the only time he had ever been seen at church was when he came rowing over to Tromoe with his wife's body in her coffin. When the pastor sprinkled earth upon it, it was observed that the tears streamed down his cheeks, and it was long after dark before he quitted the churchyard to return. He had become a proverb for obstinacy for miles beyond his own residence; and people who dealt with him for fish in the harbour, if they once began to bargain, were as likely as not to see him without a word just quietly row away.

All that was known further about "Old Jacob," as he was called, was that he had once been a pilot, and that he had had a son who had taken to drinking, through whose fault it had been eventually that the father had lost his certificate; and it was thought that on the occasion in question the father had taken the son's blame upon himself. Since then he had shunned society, and had retired with his wife to his present habitation, whither, after their son was drowned, they had brought their little orphan granddaughter, who now was his sole companion. His only ostensible means of living were by shoemaking, and by fishing, the produce of which he generally disposed of to passing ships, and, during the earlier period of his sojourn there, by shooting occasionally. But it was understood that he received a small regular contribution from several of the pilots, certificated or otherwise, of the district, for keeping a fire alight on his hearth during the dark autumn nights, and so giving them, by the light from his two windows, something to steer by when they arrived off the coast after nightfall. Whether the light was shown for their benefit particularly, or whether it was not rather intended for the guidance of smuggling vessels standing in under cover of the night to land their cargoes, it was not their business to inquire. Its friendly assistance was, at all events, not unacknowledged by these latter, and very acceptable presents, in the shape of kegs of spirits, bags of coffee, tobacco, meal, and so forth, would, from time to time, come rolling into the old man's room, so that upon the whole, he was well-to-do enough out there upon his rock.

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Of late years he had fallen into feeble health, and found it not so easy to row the long distance over to land. Even in his best days he had, owing to an old injury to one of his legs, found some difficulty in getting down to the boat; and now, therefore, he sat during the greater part of the day over the hearth, in his woolen jacket and leather breeches, with his indoor work. Now and then, when his granddaughter—a child with a thick crop of hair falling about her ears, and a rough dog constantly at her heels—would burst into the house with all the freshness of the outside air blowing round her, as it were, and deliver herself of her intelligence, he might be drawn, perhaps, to the window to look out over the sea, and afterwards, like a growling bear disturbed from its lair, even follow her with some difficulty out of the door with the spyglass. There he would station himself, so as to use her shoulder as a rest for his shaking hand, and with his never-ceasing directions and growling going on behind her neck, she would do her best to fix the glass on the desired object. His crossness would then disappear, little by little, in their joint speculation as to what ship it could be, or in whatever remarks it might suggest; and after giving his decision, the old man would generally hobble in again.

He was really very proud of his granddaughter's cleverness. She could distinguish with her naked eye as clearly as he could through the glass. She never made a mistake about the craft, large or small, that belonged to that part of the coast, and could, besides, say to a nicety, what sort of master each had. Her superiority of sight she asserted, too, with a tyranny to which he made no resistance, although it might have tried a temper many degrees more patient than his was.

One day, however, she was at a loss. They made out a crescent on the flag, and this caused even the old man a moment's astonishment. But he declared then, for her information, shortly and decisively, that it was a "barbarian."

This satisfied her for a moment. But then she asked—

"What is a barbarian, grandfather?"

"It is a Turk."

"Yes, but a Turk?"

"Oh! it's—it's—a Mohammedan—"

"A what!—a Moham—"

"A Mohammedan—a robber on board ship."

"On board ship!"

He was not going to give up his ascendancy in the matter, hard as she pushed him; so he bethought him of a pack of old tales there-arent, and went on to explain drily—



“They go to the Baltic—to Russia—to salt human flesh.”

“Human flesh!”

“Yes, and sometimes, too, they seize vessels in the open sea and do their salting there.”

She fixed a pair of large, terrified eyes on him, which made the old man continue—

“And it is especially for little girls they look. That meat is the finest, and goes by tons down to the Grand Turk.”



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Having played this last trump, he was going in again, but was stopped by her eager question—

“Do they use a glass there on board?” And when he said they did, she slipped quickly by him through the door, and kept cautiously within as long as the vessel was to be seen through the window-pane on the horizon.

The moods of the two were for once reversed. The old man looked very sly over his work, whilst she was quiet and cowed. Once only she broke out angrily—

“But why doesn’t the king get rid of them? If I was captain of a man-of-war, I’d—”

“Yes, Elizabeth, if you were captain of a man-of-war!—what then?”

The child’s conceptions apparently reached no further than such matters as these as yet. She had seen few human beings as she grew up, and in recent years, after her grandmother’s death, she and her grandfather had been the only regular inhabitants of the island. Every now and then there might perhaps come a boat on one errand or another, and a couple of times she had paid a visit to her maternal aunt on land, at Arendal. Her grandfather had taught her to read and write, and with what she found in the Bible and psalm-book, and in ‘Exploits of Danish and Norwegian Naval Heroes,’ a book in their possession, she had in a manner lived pretty much upon the anecdotes which in leisure moments she could extract from that grandfather, so chary of his speech, about his sailor life in his youth.

They had besides, in the little inner room, a small print, without a frame, of the action near the Heather Islands, in which he had taken part. It represented the frigate Naiad, with the brigs Samsø, Kiel, and Lolland, in furious conflict with the English ship of the line Dictator, which lay across the narrow harbour with the brig Calypso, and was pounding the Naiad to pieces. The names of the ships were printed underneath.

On the print there was little to be seen but mast-heads and cannon-mouths, and a confusion of smoke, but in this had the child lived whole years of her life; and many a time in fancy had she stood there and fought the Englishman. Men-of-war and their officers had become the highest conception of her fancy, and the dearest wish of her heart was that a man-of-war might some day pass so near to Torungen that she would be able to see distinctly everything on board.

CHAPTER II.

After old Jacob had fallen into ill health, lighterman Kristiansen used to come out oftener to Torungen with provisions and other necessaries; and his visits now became periodical.

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He was accompanied one autumn by his son Salve, a black-haired, dark-eyed, handsome lad, with a sharp, clever face, who had worked in the fishing-boats along the coast from his childhood almost, and had, in fact, been brought up amongst its sunken rocks and reefs and breakers. He was something small in stature, perhaps; but what he wanted in robustness he made up in readiness and activity—qualities which stood him in good stead in the many quarrels into which his too ready tongue was wont to bring him. He was eighteen years old at this time; had been already engaged as an able seaman; and was in great request at the Sandvigen and Vraangen dances,—a fact of which he was perfectly well aware. Old Jacob's granddaughter, being a little girl of only fourteen years of age, was of course altogether beneath his notice, and he didn't condescend to speak to her. He merely delivered himself of the witticism that she was like a heron; and with her thick, checked woollen handkerchief tied with the ends behind her waist, the resemblance was not so very far-fetched. At any rate, he declared on the way home that such a specimen of womankind he, for his part, had never come across before, and that he would give anything to see her dancing in the public room with her thin arms and legs—it would be like a grasshopper.

The next time he came, she took out her grandfather's watch in its silver case and showed it to him, and some conversation passed between them. His first impression of her was that she was stupid. She asked questions about every sort of thing, and seemed to think that he must know everything. And finally, she wanted to know what it was like on shore among the great folk of Arendal, and particularly how the ladies behaved. It afforded him much amusement at the time to see with what simple credulity she took in everything he chose to invent on the subject; but after he had left he was not sure that he wasn't sorry for what he had done, and at the same time he made the discovery that the girl, in her way, was anything but silly.

His remorse was to be brought home to him presently, for old Jacob had had duly recounted to him over again all his cock-and-bull stories, and was in high dudgeon. When he came again the old man was very snappish to him, and he found it so unpleasant in the house that he made all the haste he could to get his business done. While he was thus occupied, the little girl told him all about the Naiad, and the part her grandfather had taken in the action. Salve, who was ruffled, and thought the old man had been an ill-mannered old dog, followed the relation from time to time with a sneering remark, which in her eagerness she didn't notice, or didn't understand. But when he had finished what he had to do, he gave vent to his feelings in a way she did understand,—he laughed incredulously.

“Old Jacob there on board the Naiad! This is the first time anybody ever heard of it.”



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The individual in question unfortunately came out at the moment to see the boat off, and turning, to him, red with anger, she cried—

“Grandfather! he doesn’t believe you were on board the Naiad that time!”

The old man answered at first as if he didn’t deign to enter upon any controversy on the subject—

“Oh, I suppose it’s only little girls’ prattle again.”

But whether it was wounded vanity, or a sudden access of irritation against the lad, or that his eye fell upon his granddaughter standing there, so evidently incensed and resentful, he flared up the next moment, and thrusting his huge fist under the youngster’s nose, burst out—

“If you want to know all about it, you young swabber, I may tell you I stood on the Naiad’s gun-deck with better folk than *you* are ever likely to come across”—he stamped his foot here as if he had the deck under him—“when, with one broadside from the Dictator, the three masts and bowsprit were shot away, and the main deck came crashing down upon the lower;”—the last sentence was taken from ‘Exploits of Danish and Norwegian Naval Heroes,’ and the old man was as proud of these lines as he would have been of a medal.

“When the crash came,” he pursued, always in the same posture, and in the manner of the sacred text, “he who stands here and tells the tale had but just time to save himself by leaping into the sea through a gun-port.”

But he threw off then the trammels of the text, and continued *in propria persona*, violently gesticulating with his fists, and steadily advancing all the time, while Salve prudently retreated before his advance down to the boat.

“We don’t deal in lies and fabricate stories out here like you, you young whipper-snapper of a ship’s cub; and if it wasn’t for your father, who has sense enough to rope’s-end you himself, I’d lay a stick across your back till you hadn’t a howl left in you.”

With this finale of the longest speech to which he had given vent for thirty years perhaps, he turned with a short nod to the father, and went into the house again.

Elizabeth was miserable that Salve should go away like this, without so much as deigning to say good-bye to her. And her grandfather was cross enough himself; for he was afraid that he had done something foolish, and broken with the lighterman.



CHAPTER III.

Salve came out to the rock again the next autumn, after a voyage to Liverpool and Havre.

At first he was rather shy, although his father and old Jacob Torungen had in the interval, in spite of that little affair of the previous year, been on the best of terms. The white bear, however, as he called him, seemed to have altogether forgotten what had passed; and with the girl he was very easily reconciled—she had learnt now not to tell everything to her grandfather.



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Whilst the lighterman and old Jacob enjoyed a heart-warming glass together in the house, Salve carried the things up to the cellar, Elizabeth following him up and down every time, and the conversation meanwhile going round all the points of the compass, so to speak. After she had asked him about Havre de Grace, where he had been, and about America, where he had not been,—if his captain's wife was as fine as a man-of-war captain's; and then if he wouldn't like one day to marry a fine lady,—she wanted at last to know, from the laughing sailor lad, if the officers' wives were ever allowed to be with them in war.

Her face had of late acquired something wonderfully attractive in its expression—such a seriousness would come over it sometimes, although she continued as childlike as ever; and such eyes as hers were, at all events in Salve's experience, not common. At any rate, after this, he invariably accompanied his father upon these expeditions.

The last time he was out there he told her about the dances on shore at Sandvigen, and took care to give her to understand that the girls made much of him there—but he was tired now of dancing with them.

She was very curious on this subject, and extracted from him that he had had two tremendous fights that winter. She looked at him in terror, and asked rather hesitatingly

—
“But had they done anything to you?”

“Oh, no! all dancing entertainments have a little extra dance like that to wind up with. They merely wanted to dance with the girl I had asked first.”

“Is it so dangerous, then? What sort of a girl was she?—I mean, what was her name?”

“Oh, one was called Marie, and the other was Anne—Herluf Andersen's daughter. They were pretty girls, I can tell you. Anne had a white brooch and earrings, and danced more smoothly than ever you saw a cutter sail. Mate George said the same.”

The upshot of this conversation was, that she found out that the girls in Arendal, and in the ports generally where he had touched, were all well dressed; and the next time he returned from Holland, he promised he would bring with him a pair of morocco-leather shoes with silver buckles for her.

With this promise they parted, after she had allowed him—and that there might be no mistake, twice over—to take the accurate measure of her foot; and there were roses of joy in her cheeks, as she called after him to be sure and not forget them.

The year after Salve came with the shoes. There were silver buckles in them, and they were very smart; but if they were, they had cost him more than half a month's pay.

Elizabeth was more carefully dressed now, and might almost be called grown up. She hesitated about accepting the shoes, and didn't ask questions about everything as she used to do. Nor was she so willing to stand and talk with him alone by the boat—she liked to have him up within hearing of the others.

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“Don’t you see how high the sea is running?” he said, and tried to persuade her that the boat would be dashed to pieces on the rocks. But she saw that it wasn’t true, and went up with a little toss of her head alone. He followed her.

She must have learned all this in Arendal, where in the course of the autumn she had been confirmed, and where she had lived with her aunt. But she had grown marvellously handsome in that time—so much so, indeed, that Salve was almost taken aback when he saw her; and when they said good-bye, it was no longer in the old laughing tones, but with some slight embarrassment on his side—he didn’t seem to know exactly how matters lay between them.

After that she filled his head so completely that he had not a thought for anything else.

CHAPTER IV.

The old Juno, to which Salve belonged, was lying at that time at Sandvigen, and was only waiting for a north-east wind to come out. She was a square-rigged vessel, with a crew of nineteen hands all told, which had plied for many years in American waters, and off and on in the North Sea, and was reckoned at the time one of Arendal’s largest craft. Her arrival or departure was quite an event for the town and neighbourhood; and to have a berth in her was considered among the sailors of the district a very high honour indeed—the more so that her master and principal owner, Captain Beck, was a particularly good chief to serve under, and a lucky one to boot.

When at last, between ten and eleven o’clock one morning, she weighed anchor, and before a light north-westerly breeze, with her small sails set, glided out to sea, the quays were crowded with spectators, the majority of the crew belonging to the place, and it being generally known that they were bound on a longer voyage than usual. On board she had with her still the captain’s son, Carl Beck, a smart young naval officer, with his sister and a small party of their friends, who meant to land out on the Torungen in the sailing-boat they had in tow. They wished to remain with her as long as possible, and for the purpose had made up a party to the islands, where the gentlemen proposed to shoot some of the sea-fowl, which are to be found out there on the rocks in swarms at the spring season of the year on their passage north along the coast.

It was about four o’clock when they passed Little Torungen; and as there were swells then bursting in white jets upon the reefs, and a line of dark fire-fringed clouds about the sunset, which looked like heavy weather coming up, the pleasure party determined to leave the vessel here, instead of going on, as they had intended, to the larger of the two islands.

As they went over the side Salve Kristiansen was standing out on the forecastle gazing eagerly over to where the barren mass of rock lay like a dipping hull in the distance,



bathed in the evening sun, and with a fringe of foam round its base; and he could see old Jacob's granddaughter standing by the wall of the house with the glass. He had chosen on purpose a conspicuous place, and stood with his back against the stay, so heavy of heart and sad at having to go away, that it would have taken very little to make him burst into tears. It seemed to have dawned upon him all of a sudden that he was in love.



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To try whether it was upon him that she was directing the glass, or at the unusual discharging of freight into the sail-boat, he waved his hat, and his whole face lighted up with joy as he saw her return his signal. He took off his hat again, and received another wave of the glass in reply.

He stood there then straining his eyes abstractedly in the direction of the rock until it disappeared behind them in the gathering twilight. He had been inspired for the whole voyage; and the first thing he should do when they arrived at Boston would be to buy a dress and a ring; and when he came home he determined that his first business should be to make an expedition to the island, and put a certain question to a certain person whom he knew out there.

He was roused from his abstraction by the boatswain bawling out his name, and asking if he was going to sleep there, and whether he wanted something to wake him up. The order had been given to make all snug for the night, as the breeze was freshening.

The watches had been set at noon, and the starboard and larboard watch told off, as customary on the first day a vessel goes to sea. Salve had the middle watch; and by that time the sea was running high, and they were plunging through the darkness under a double-reefed mainsail, the moon every now and then clearing an open space in the storm—clouds that were driving like smoke before it, so that he could fitfully distinguish objects over the deck, even to the look-out man's looming figure out upon the fore-castle.

Upon the capstan bar sat a sailor in oilskin clothes, who had probably been on shore the previous night and not closed his eyes, and who was making great efforts to keep awake. His head, however, would still keep nodding; and from time to time he stood up and tried to keep himself warm by exercising his arms. He sang, or more often took up afresh upon each recovery of consciousness a verse of a half-Swedish ballad about a "girl so true," that he wished he then had by his side, for the time without her seemed so long. Now and then the spray of a sea would bring him more sharply to himself, but it did not last long; and so the ditty, which was melancholy to the last degree, would begin afresh.

Salve was far too restless to have any desire to sleep, and as he paced to and fro by the fore-hatch, lost in his dreams, and listened to the song, it seemed to him a most touching one.

The nodding sailor little thought that he was performing before a deeply-moved audience.



CHAPTER V.

The party, meanwhile, that had left the ship, were passing the night with old Jacob on Torungen. They had tried first to beat out to the larger island, but the sea had risen, darkness had set in, and it had soon become evident that it was no longer pleasure-sailing for a boat with ladies in it. They had determined, therefore, rather than go about for home, and lose the whole sporting expedition, which was to have lasted for two or three days, to spend the night on Little Torungen and see what the morning would do for them.



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Great was old Jacob's astonishment, it may readily be supposed, when there came in the late evening a knocking at the door, and he saw by the light from the hearth no less than six grand folk come streaming in, with two ladies amongst them. He shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked at them in mute amazement.

As for Elizabeth, if it had been a train of fairies that had suddenly appeared, they could not have occasioned her more terror and curiosity. It was getting near bedtime, and she had been sitting half-asleep over the fire, and perhaps her suddenly awakened excitement lent a more than usual animation and attraction to a pair of eyes and a face that would nowhere have passed unnoticed; for Carl Beck, who was at the head of the party, seemed positively fascinated, and could not take his eyes off her, until, reddening with confusion, she instinctively stretched out her hand for her bodice, that lay beside her on the bench.

"Good evening, Jacob, old boy," cried Carl, in the frank, off-hand manner that became him so well, going up to the old fellow, and laying his hand cordially on his shoulder. "I'm afraid we shall be very troublesome to you, such a large party; but we want you to let us stay here till morning, till we see if the weather moderates a bit. We daren't go driving out in the dark to Great Torungen, on account of these women folk that we have on board,"—and he pointed, jokingly, to his sister and her friend.

"I see you have to deal with womankind too, so you know what it is."

The old man was apparently not insensible to this genial way of dealing with him. He rose from his seat and made room at the fire, begging that they would put up with what accommodation he had to offer, and telling Elizabeth at the same time to go out for more wood.

While the party gathered round the fire, and made themselves as comfortable as they could, Carl Beck was outside with the boatmen, seeing about having the provisions brought up. He came in again with Elizabeth, also with an armful of wood. Throwing it down, laughing, he cried—

"Now for a 'bowl,' as our friends the Swedes have it. But first, out with the food."

There was no scarcity of eatables, which were discussed amid a running fire of conversation upon every kind of topic; and then came the "bowl," a composition of various strong and spicy ingredients, of which Carl had the secret, and which finally was lighted, and ladled into the glasses whilst the blue flame was burning.

Carl Beck was the life of the party; and very well he looked as he sat there astride over the bench, with his glass in his hand, and his officer's jacket with its anchor-buttons thrown open, and sang first one and then another of the rollicking drinking-songs that

were then in vogue, the others joining in the chorus. He gave them, then, a cheery sailor-song, which brought in its train a series of anecdotes from the recent war.



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Old Jacob, under the influence of the prevailing good-fellowship and the good cheer, had become uncommonly lively for him, and would even put in a word now and then. But every attempt to make him tell a story himself failed. Only when the action at the Heather Islands came up for discussion for a while did he come out with a bit of a yarn, as he called it.

“Yes,” he said, putting carefully down the glass that was handed to him, “it was a great battle, was that. The country lost a fine ship there, and many a brave lad to boot. But God’s curse hangs over the man that piloted the Englishman in to the Sand Islands—although none here, while he was alive, knew his name. It was said he soon after made an end of himself through remorse, like Judas Iscariot. However that may be, at the mouth of the channel there is a flat sunk rock that a man in his sea-boots can stand on at low water, and there they see him on moonlight nights making piteous signs for help, until the water at last comes over his head, and he disappears. God help the man that’ll row out to him—it’s always foul weather when he is to be seen.”

“Have you ever seen him yourself, Jacob?” asked Carl Beck.

“I’ll not say that I have, and I’ll not say that I haven’t. But I know that the last time I was off those islands, we had such tremendous weather that we thought ourselves lucky in making any port at all.”

For a while every one was busied with the thoughts which Jacob’s recital had suggested, and there was a solemn pause, which was broken by Carl Beck’s striking up another song to keep off sleep:—

“Before the wind and a flowing sail,
Vessels for every port!
In letters of gold a dear girl’s name
On every stern inwrought!
The vessel may sail the world around,
But with her the girls will still be found!
Hurrah! then, boys, for the one of your mind,
That never, oh, never, you’ll leave behind.”

He repeated the last couplet with a gay inclination of his glass to the ladies, who were sitting now tired and huddled together on the bench, and over their heads to Elizabeth, who was standing in the background, awake enough for both of them. The light from the fire fell upon his handsome brown face, with the raven black curly hair, and the dark eyes that it was said he had inherited from his recently deceased mother, who was from Brest; and with his flow of animal spirits, that sufficed for the whole party almost, he certainly was as manly and handsome a lad as you would wish to meet.



The wind by this time had gone down considerably; and, as day was breaking, the whole party were in the boat once more and enjoying a quiet sleep as they sailed. It was long, though, before Elizabeth could get out of her thoughts the handsome young officer who had sat there by the fire. And many a time would she conjure up his form on the bench again—particularly as he looked when he held up his glass and glanced over to her while he sang—



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“Hurrah! then, boys, for the one of your mind,
That never, oh, never, you’ll leave behind.”

Subsequently to this, Carl Beck made repeated excursions out to Torungen to shoot sea-birds, and, by preference, alone in his sailing-boat. But, whether it was an instinct or not on her side, it happened somehow that he never had any further conversation with her without the old man being with them.

CHAPTER VI.

The Juno arrived in due course at Boston, where Salve invested a considerable portion of his wages in the material for a dress, a couple of silk handkerchiefs, and two massive rings with his own and Elizabeth’s initials on them.

From Boston she proceeded to Grimsby with a Canadian cargo; then on a short trip to Liverpool; then back to Quebec; and some ten or eleven months after leaving Arendal, they were on a voyage from Memel in the Baltic to New York, with a cargo of timber, planks, and pipe-staves—the intention being to call in at the home port, for which she had some general cargo, to take in provisions.

During these voyages Salve, as one may say, had completed his apprenticeship to the sea; and in his blue shirt loosely knotted round the throat, his leather belt and canvas trousers, he had such a look of smartness and energy that it required no very great amount of discernment to perceive in him a sailor from top to toe. He had, sooner than most, risen superior to the dangers and temptations to which young sailor lads are exposed during the years of their novitiate, and with a break-neck recklessness of disposition he combined such a perfectly cat-like activity, that his superior smartness was recognised even among his comrades. His bearing, it is true, was rather arrogant, and his tongue not the most good-natured; but he was generally liked nevertheless, for he was kind-hearted, if he was only taken on the right side, and it did not seem to be his sailor-like qualities upon which he prided himself so much as upon the superior acuteness of his understanding, which he delighted to display in discussions with the red-bearded and somewhat consequential sailmaker, who had the reputation of being a well-read man, and who affected a proportionate importance.

Up at Memel they had had great difficulties to contend with, owing to the condition of the ice; and their bad luck seemed to be going to follow them, for in the Skager Rack they found themselves suddenly wedged into a field of drift-ice, with the prospect of having to remain where they were for weeks perhaps. The cold had been unusually severe that winter in the Baltic, and out over the plain of ice by which they were surrounded they could see flags of all nations sharing a similar fate. There was nothing for it but to wait and hope; and if the ice did not break up soon, short rations would become the order of the day.

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It was wearisome; and to Salve above all, who was feverishly longing to get home, and whose temperament was little suited for the endurance of such agonies of Tantalus. He became the very embodiment of restlessness. A hundred times a-day he went aloft to look out for some prospect of a change, and to strain his eyes after the streak of land to the north which was to be made out on clear days from the maintop-gallant mast-head, and which of course would be the coast of Norway. The dress, the silk handkerchiefs, the rings, and what he should say to Elizabeth—whether he should formally request a private interview with her, or wait till an opportunity offered—were running incessantly in his head. And particularly what he should say to her seemed now, often as he had thought it over during the long voyage and settled it to his satisfaction, to present many points of difficulty. He must go down then to his seaman's chest and see if the things were still there all right, and whether the moths might not have got into them; the last inspection, when he unfolded the stuff in his bunk, being conducted with uncommon precautions.

At last there came a prospect of release in the shape of thick weather, and a southerly gale setting on the Norwegian coast. The ice too had for a day or two previously begun to show blue patches of water here and there, and when it was dark that evening they felt themselves free once more.

In spite of the salt water and the rain, which he had to wipe off his face every minute, Salve went to his look-out post forward that night, and stood there humming to himself, whilst the rest of the crew who were on duty slopped up and down on the deck-cargo below, in sea-boots and dripping oilskins, or sheltered themselves, as best they could, under the lee of the round-house or forecastle. They had been hard at work all day, making openings in the ice; and now the groaning and whistling among the blocks and ropes, that were increasing every minute, gave little promise of rest for the night.

The captain stood upon the poop in his thick overcoat and drenched fur cap, with his trumpet under his arm, looking anxiously through the night-glass from time to time, and his voice sounded unusually stern. There lay before him in the dark, blustering, winter night a veritable David's choice. The strong southerly current, aided by the gale, was fast carrying him in under the Norwegian coast; while on the other hand, if he tried to beat to windward, he risked coming into collision with the ice-floes. Added to that, he was not very clear as to his position; and as the gale increased, he began to pace restlessly backwards and forwards, addressing, every now and then, a word down to one of the helmsmen, whose forms could be seen by the gleam from the binnacle.

"How's her head, Jens?"

"Sou'-west, sir; she'll lay no higher."



“H’m! more and more on land!” he muttered, the perspiration coming out upon his forehead under his fur cap, which, in spite of the rain, he had to push back to get air. Both life and ship would soon be at stake.



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“What says the look-out-man, mate?” he asked of the latter, who came up the steps at this moment from taking a turn forward.

“Black as pitch. If we stuck a lantern out on the flying jib-boom, we should see that far at any rate. But the lead gives deep water.”

“Does it?” was the rather scornful rejoinder.

“The blockhead doesn’t seem to know yet,” growled the captain, as the other turned away, “that the lead will give you deep water here until your vessel has her nose upon the cliff.”

There was no chance of a pilot on such a night as this promised to be; but still, in the hope that the wind might carry the sound in under land, a few shots were fired from the signal-gun.

At last there was no longer any choice left. If they were not to end upon the rocks that night, they must crowd on more sail, and try at all hazards to haul off the coast.

The order was accordingly given to shake a reef out, followed by “Haul in the topsail bow-lines—clap on the topsail halyards, and hoist away!” and in the darkness might be heard occasionally “halimen-oh!-oh hoi!” as the sailors worked at the tough and heavy sail, with the cordage all stiff and swollen with ice and slippery with the rain, the spray driving in their faces, and the vessel rolling so that sometimes they were hanging on by the ropes only, when the deck went from under their feet.

Under the fresh weight of sail the vessel careened over, and shot foaming forward with new life for a moment. The next, the topsail had burst away from the bolt-ropes with a report as of a cannon-shot, and she had fallen away into the trough of the sea. The mainstay-sail sheet parted at the same time, and a deluge of water carried overboard, with part of the bulwarks, a large portion of the deck cargo, which consisted of heavy timber, leaving the remainder tossed about in the wildest confusion, and much of it standing on end against the railings and capstan.

It was some time before she could be brought up in the wind again, and the old Juno had then to go through a trial such as her joints even in her younger days had never been equal to. She was like many another vessel that is a good sailor enough, a little broken-backed from the weight of the cargo amidships; and as she gave to the strain, the ladder that stood in the hold began to saw up and down in the coaming forward, while the water came oozing in through the staring bow timbers, and the pumps had to be kept continually going. The hatches were all battened down, and many of the crew had lashed themselves to the lower rigging as preferable now to the deck.



“Ready about!—tacks and sheets!” &c.; “luff now, and keep her close to the wind!”—the same monotonous words of command all through the night every time they lay over upon a new tack, while at the same time they would generally ship a heavy sea, and the vessel would shake through all her frame.



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Day broke and passed in a fog, that left them in much the same uncertainty as before about their position. For one moment it had lifted, and they fancied they had seen “Homborgsund’s Fald,” a high landmark up the country above Arendal, and from its lowness and dimness on the horizon, they had been encouraged to hope that they had appreciably increased their distance from the coast. About noon they passed an English brig that had been through the same struggle as the Juno was now engaged upon, whose signals of distress they had already occasionally heard faintly upon the wind, and which now seemed on the point of foundering. The crew had climbed into the after-rigging, which was all that now remained standing, and they made despairing signs for help; but it was impossible to render any. They had enough to do to keep themselves afloat.

The gale showed no signs of moderating, and that night, as Salve Kristiansen and another were taking their turn at the wheel, there gleamed suddenly out of the pitchy darkness to leeward of the fore-rigging the white crest of a tremendous eddy wave, which a moment after came crashing down upon the deck, carrying clean away the round-house, binnacle, and long-boat, damaging the wheel, and leaving many of the drenched and half—suffocated sailors deposited in the most unexpected places, and only glad to find that they still had the deck under them.

“Ugly sea on the lee-bow!” was heard again from forward, and all in that direction seemed suddenly to have become a mass of white.

“Ready about!—hard a-lee!” and with a great lurch the old craft went about once more, the renewed shrieking in every kind of pitch in the rigging, and the blinding dash of spray, showing to what a hurricane the gale had risen.

Salve had been too much occupied with the damaged wheel at first to have a thought to spare for anything else; but it recurred to him very soon that when that first dark sea had broken over them so unexpectedly from leeward, he had seen for a moment the glimmer of two lights on its crest, and a world of associations was at once aroused in his mind: it seemed to the lad’s romantic fancy that he was keeping an appointment with Elizabeth Raklev. As he glanced hurriedly back, the two light-dots again appeared. He had seen them too often before to be mistaken, and he shouted over his shoulder to the captain, who noticed them now for the first time, “Those lights behind to leeward are from old Jacob’s hearth on Torungen!”

“Are you sure of that?” muttered Beck, coming nearer to him at the same time over the sloping deck with the help of a rope. “If they are, it will not be long before we are dashed to atoms on the rocks.”

A conversation ensued between them, in which Salve declared that he had known the water under Torungen from childhood as well as he did his father’s garden; and the

upshot was that Beck, pale and hesitating, determined to go in under land with him as pilot.



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“It is much that is being intrusted this night to two young shoulders,” said he; “and see you think twice, young man, both for your own life’s sake and ours.”

They kept away then, and stood in under land with the least sail they could carry in the tremendous sea that was now breaking in their wake, and soon the thunder of the breakers became audible.

Salve was pale, but perfectly calm, as he stood there with the speaking-trumpet, after having taken over the command, and with the captain and mate by his side. But all of a sudden great beads of perspiration came out on his forehead. There was something curiously irregular about the light. It had become dim and red, and then seemed to go out altogether. Had he by any possibility made a mistake? and was he now sailing the Juno with all on board straight for the rocks?

The uncertainty lasted for a quarter of an hour, and never in his life had Salve seen so heavy a countenance as that with which Beck, whose expression discovered a trace of doubt, looked at him, evidently hesitating whether he should not take the command again himself.

But in the mean time the gleam of light shone forth again—whatever might have been the cause of its obscuration—and that night Salve Kristiansen brought the Juno safely into Merdoe.

CHAPTER VII.

Out on Little Torungen meanwhile noteworthy events had occurred, which were now the talk of the town.

Old Jacob had had a stroke the week before, and had died the same night the Juno had had her wrestle for life. In the preceding two days of fog and storm they had heard many signal-guns of distress, and his granddaughter had during that time kept up the fire alone at night. It was only as he was drawing his last breath, and she sat by his side and bent over him, forgetful of aught else, that it was for a while neglected; and it was this little moment that had caused Salve such a *mauvais quart d’heure* on board the Juno. On the following day, in her despair, she had attempted a perilous journey over the drift ice to bring people out to her assistance, and had been taken up by a boat and brought in by it to Arendal.

The poor girl was far too much occupied with her grief for the loss of her grandfather to think in the remotest degree of making her story interesting. But Carl Beck, in his enthusiasm, knew very well how to give the incident a colouring of romance, and she was very soon exalted into the heroine of the hour. It was talked of at the Amtmand’s—a house with two handsome daughters, where Lieutenant Beck was a daily visitor—and



it was in everybody's mouth how, all alone out on Torungen with her dying grandfather, she had been the means of saving the Juno, and had since risked her life on the ice. Every one could see by a glance at her that she must have a remarkable character; but as to her uncommon beauty there prevailed different opinions in feminine circles. It was, at all events, a pity that she was so forlorn; and the Becks, it was thought, were now morally bound to look after her.



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For the present she had gone to live with her aunt up in one of the narrow streets at the back of the town, and there came pouring in, with and without the owners' names, all sorts of friendly advice, with black dress materials and ornaments from the young men and shop lads; and a couple of the bustling ladies of the town even came in person to see her aunt and talk over the girl's future. When Carl Beck, however, gave out that he looked upon these presents as slights upon himself, they ceased. He had only been up there once, and then his eldest sister was with him: but his manner on that occasion had been most attractive, he had sympathised with such winning sincerity, and at the same time so unassumingly, in Elizabeth's grief; and when leaving assured her, with emotion which he made no attempt to conceal, that they owed it to her that their father was still alive.

When he was gone, his sister had proceeded to the real matter of her visit. She had come to propose to the aunt that Elizabeth should live with them for the present with the view of qualifying herself for a housekeeper's place, as she must not be exposed to the necessity of going out as a common servant-girl. It was her brother, she added, who had made this plan for Elizabeth's future.

The offer was a highly desirable one for persons in their position, and was accepted by the aunt with unmixed satisfaction. Over Elizabeth's face, however, there passed a momentary cloud. She felt, without knowing why, a sense of oppression at the prospect of coming into closer contact with the young lieutenant; but at the same time she would not for a great deal have refused the offer.

CHAPTER VIII.

As for Salve, during the first few days after coming home he was a happy man. He was in love: he had received from his captain a hundred-daler note, accompanied by a promise that as soon as he had learnt navigation he should be third mate on board the Juno; and he heard himself admired on all sides by his equals and associates. There was so much work to be done, though, in discharging the cargo and getting the vessel into dock for repairs—they had managed to get her up as far as Arendal—that it would be Saturday evening before he could get his so longed-for home-leave.

On the day before, as he was sitting on watch in the early morning under the lee of the bulwark, he accidentally overheard a conversation going on upon the slip below that set his blood on fire.

The carpenters had just come to their work, and one of them was telling the story of old Jacob's death, and of the heroism which his granddaughter had displayed.

"They say," he went on, "that Captain Beck is to have him buried on Monday next, and that he is to provide for the granddaughter—the navy lieutenant has seen to that."

The noise and the clinking of the hammers that were now at work made Salve lose a good deal of the conversation here.



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“There is good reason for that, mind you,” was the next observation he caught, made in a somewhat lower tone, and accompanied by a doubtful laugh. “It is not for nothing that he has been out so constantly shooting sea-fowl about Torungen.”

“Would she be a—sea-bird of that feather? Old Jacob, I should have thought, was not the kind of man—”

“Well, perhaps not that altogether; but the first thing she did was to come straight over here; and he has had her already taken into his own house. I have that from the aunt. The old woman had no suspicion of anything, but told me quite innocently that now she was to be a sort of housekeeper with the Becks.”

A slight noise above him here caused the speaker to look up. A deadly pale young sailor was staring down at him over the ship’s side with a pair of eyes that struck him as resembling those he had once seen in the head of a mad dog. Their owner turned away at once and crossed the deck.

“That must have been the lover!” he whispered over to the other, as he set to work with his adze upon the pencilled plank. Shortly after he muttered in a tone of compunction

—
“If I saw that physiognomy aright, some one had better take care of himself when he gets leave ashore.”

Salve had sprung to his feet in a fury when he heard about young Beck, but the desire to hear more had kept him spellbound. What further had been hinted of his relations with Elizabeth, and that the latter had even taken refuge in his house, seemed all only too probable. He knew both the men who had been speaking; they were respectable folks, and the one besides had had the news from the aunt herself.

There was hard work that day on board, but his hands were as if they had been benumbed. It was impossible for him to give any assistance, except in appearance, when any hauling was to be done;—he did everything mechanically.

“Are you sick, lad, or longing after your sweetheart?” said the mate to him in the course of the afternoon. He saw that there was something wrong with him.

That last, “after your sweetheart,” had a wonderfully rousing influence. He felt himself all at once relieved of his heavy feeling of exhaustion, and worked now so hard that the perspiration poured down his face, joining in the hauling song from time to time with a wild, unnatural energy: he was afraid to leave himself a moment for thought. When the day was over, however, he took the anchor watch for a comrade, who was overjoyed at the unexpected prospect of getting a quiet night in his hammock, and at escaping from



his turn of “ship’s dog”—that watch consisting of one man only, whose business it is to keep the ship from harbour-thieves.

He paced up and down the deck alone in the pitchy darkness, that was only relieved by a lantern or two out in the harbour, and a light here and there up in the town—sometimes standing for long minutes together, with his cheek on his hand, leaning on the railing. He could, without the slightest scruple, murder young Beck—that he felt.



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At two o'clock he crossed over to the boards that were sloped against the vessel's side, slid down them in the dark to the slip, and from there made his way ashore. Elizabeth's aunt lived in one of the small houses above; and he had determined to wake her and have a talk with her.

Widow Kirstine was a portly, somewhat worn perhaps, but otherwise strong-looking, old woman, with a good broad face, and thin grey hair drawn down behind her ears. She was not unused to being disturbed at night, one of her occupations being to nurse sick people; but she always grumbled whenever she was. When she held up the candle she had lit, and recognised Salve Kristiansen, she thought, from his paleness and general appearance, that he was drunk.

"Is that you, Salve?—and a pretty state to be in at this time of night!" she began, severely, in the doorway, not caring to let him in at first. "Is that the way you spend your wages?"

"No, mother, it's not. I've come off my watch; I wanted to have a word with you about Elizabeth."

His tone was so strangely low and sorrowful, that the old woman saw that there must be something unusual the matter; and she opened the door.

"About Elizabeth, you say?"

"Yes—where is she stopping now?"

"Where is she stopping?—why, with the Becks, of course. Is there anything the matter?"

"You ought to know that best, mother Kirstine," he said, earnestly.

She held up the light to his face, and looked at him in vague anxiety, but could make nothing out of it.

"If I ought to know it, tell me," she said, almost in a tone of entreaty.

"Young Beck, I hear, has been out about Torungen the whole year—shooting sea-birds—or—do you really think he means to marry her?" he broke out wildly, and raising his voice.

It was only now that she caught his full meaning; and setting down the candlestick hard upon the table, she dropped into the chair by the side herself.



“So—that is what they are saying, is it?” she cried at last. Her first fear was over; but anger had succeeded to it, and she rose now from her seat with arms akimbo and flashing eyes. She was not a woman to offend lightly.

“So they have fastened that lie upon Elizabeth, have they!—it’s a shame for them, so it is! And you, Salve, can soil your lips with it? Let me just tell you, then, for your pains, that the Becks’ house is as respectable a one as any in Arendal; and it isn’t you, and such as you, that can take its character away. Never fear but Elizabeth shall hear every word of your precious story—ay, and the captain, and the lieutenant, and Madam Beck, too; and you’ll be hunted from the Juno like a dripping cur. So you thought that Elizabeth was to be beholden to the lieutenant for a character—?”

“Dear mother Kirstine!” Salve cried, interrupting her in the full torrent of her indignation, “I didn’t think about it—I couldn’t think. Only, I heard Anders of the Crag down on the slip this morning say it all so confidently.



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“Anders of the Crag? So it was from him you heard it?—the pitiful, wheedling rascal! That is his gratitude, I suppose, for my being with his wife last week!—I shall know where to find him. But the receiver in the like is no better than the stealer,” she resumed, indignantly; “and I’d have you know, it was just Beck’s own daughter who came here and offered Elizabeth a respectable place in a respectable house, and it was to me she talked, my lad,” pointing self-consciously with quivering forefinger at her own bosom; “so Elizabeth has not begged herself in there at all. You didn’t need to desert your watch to bring such tales here; and Elizabeth shall hear of it—that she shall,” she repeated, excitedly, striking one hand into the other with a loud smack—“she shall hear what fine faith you have in her.”

“Dear mother Kirstine! I didn’t mean any harm,” he said, entreatingly, feeling as if a weight had been taken off his heart—“only please don’t tell Elizabeth.”

“You may depend upon it I will.”

“Mother Kirstine!” he said, in a low voice, and looking down, “I brought a dress with me for her that I had bought in Boston. And then I heard all this, and I couldn’t contain myself.” He said nothing about the rings.

“So!” rejoined the old woman after a pause, during which she had examined him through her half-closed eyes, and in a somewhat milder tone; “so you brought a dress for her! and at the same time you come running up here in the middle of the night to tell me that she has become a common baggage for the lieutenant,”—and her anger rose again.

“But, Mother Kirstine, I don’t believe a word of it.”

“It wasn’t to tell me that, I suppose, you came up here in such haste, my lad.”

“I was only mad to think such a thing could be said of her.”

“Well, be off with you now! Anders of the Crag shall go farther with his lie—if I go with him before the Foged and the Maritime Court.”

For the matter of that, she might as well have threatened to go with him to the moon; but Salve understood her to mean by the Maritime Court the bloodiest course she knew.

As she opened the door to let him out, she said with a certain confidential seriousness—“Tell me, Salve! has anything passed between you and Elizabeth?”

He seemed uncertain for a moment what reply he should make to this unexpected invitation of confidence. At length he said—



“I don’t know, Mother Kirstine, for certain; two years ago, I made her a present of a pair of shoes.”

“You did!—well, see now and get on board again without any one noticing you—that’s my advice,” she replied, without allowing herself to be brought any further into the matter, and pushed him then rather unceremoniously out of the door.

After he had gone she sat for a while with the light in her lap, staring at it and nodding her head reflectively.

“He’s a good and a handsome lad that Salve,” she said at last, aloud. “But on the whole it will be better to tell Elizabeth, and then she can be on her guard there in the house;” and having come to this decision she rose from her seat and prepared to go to bed again.



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Salve, notwithstanding this interview, was far from being at ease next day, and he felt the courage he had mustered up, to go straight to Elizabeth with the dress and ring, altogether gone.

In the evening, when all the crew were given leave from the ship for three weeks, he went off to his father instead, to see if he could learn more of the situation through inquiries from him; and on the following Monday both were present at old Jacob's interment in Tromoe churchyard.

CHAPTER IX.

All these events had come upon Elizabeth with overwhelming suddenness. It seemed to her like a confused dream. Yet the fact remained that there she was, dressed in black, an inmate of one of those handsome houses, the interiors of which she had so often pictured to herself out on Torungen.

Captain Beck was married to a second wife, a woman of stern principles, full of decision and respectability, who had brought him a considerable fortune, and, under her lynx-eyed rule, had restored that order in household matters which, during the period her husband was a widower, had been far too much neglected; and though his power might still be absolute on board the Juno, it had long since ceased to be so in his own house. By her grown-up step-children Madam Beck was in the highest degree respected, though not exactly loved, owing to the various unaccustomed restraints to which they now found themselves subjected; and as to Carl, his easy tact, notwithstanding the independent position which he enjoyed in his home as salaried member of a coast commission, enabled him to keep on the best of terms with his imperious stepmother. His duties would detain him about home for another year, to be still feted by the town, and idolised by his sisters, who were never tired of speculating upon eligible matches for him.

From the very first, Elizabeth, who, in her utter ignorance how to behave, committed one egregious blunder after another, had perceived with her strong sense that it would require all the cleverness and patience she possessed to enable her to maintain the situation; and she began by following Madam Beck about untiringly like a lamb. Many a painful scene had she to go through during the earlier period of their connection, and she bore them with a quiet gentleness which Madam Beck took for modest docility, but which had its real origin in a fixed determination to succeed. Every now and then, however, she would give it up as hopeless, and would seat herself disconsolately by the window with her cheek upon her hand, and gaze wistfully out over the harbour. She longed so for cold fresh air, and would end by throwing up the window and stretching herself with her heated face as far out of it as she possibly could, till Madam Beck would come in, and in a stern voice call her back. Madam Beck, in her irritation, used to say that it was almost as if they had taken a wild thing into the house.



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Carl Beck understood very well what she was going through, and would occasionally throw her an encouraging look; but Elizabeth affected always not to understand it. On one occasion, however, when she was corrected in his presence, she hurriedly left the room, and throwing herself on her bed, lay there and sobbed as if her heart would break.

She had been trusted one afternoon, shortly after, to bring in the tea-tray, on which, without thinking what she was doing, she had placed the chafing-dish with the boiling teakettle. It fell as she was carrying it in; but although its hot side and the boiling water burnt and scalded her arm and hand, she carried the tray quite quietly out again without allowing a muscle of her face to change—she was not going to be corrected before him again.

Madam Beck herself bound up her hand in the kitchen, where she stood white with pain; while Carl, who had been sitting on the sofa, and had seen how the whole thing happened, forgetting his self-command, had jumped up in great excitement, and had shown such uncommon sympathy that his sister Mina, afterwards, when they were alone in the room together, said, with a look that was more searching than the joking words seemed to require, “It is not possible you are fond of the girl, Carl?”

“No fear, Mina,” he answered quickly, in the same tone, chucking her under the chin as he spoke. “There are as handsome girls as her in Arendal; but you can see as well as I can that she is a girl in a hundred. That business with the tea-tray is what very few others would have been capable of; and we mustn’t forget that if it had not been for her —”

“Oh yes,” rejoined Mina, with a toss of her head, a little tired of the eternal repetition of this stock observation. “She didn’t know all the same that it was papa who was out there.”

It was a game of hypocrisy, thought out with no inconsiderable subtlety, that the handsome lieutenant was carrying on in this matter: under his apparently so entirely frank sailor-bearing there was hidden a real diplomatist. By trumpeting about the town the service which Elizabeth had rendered them in saving the Juno, he had, one may say, forced his family to take her up, though to them he made it appear that public opinion left them no alternative. On the other hand, he was uncommonly cautious in his attitude towards Elizabeth herself; for he knew he must win her without attracting the attention of his stepmother and sisters. He believed he had made a sort of impression upon her; but at the same time he felt that he had a wild swan to deal with, that might at any moment spread its wings and fly away—there was such a strong, independent individuality about her.



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In his home, however, she had become a different creature, scarcely to be recognised as the same Elizabeth,—so quietly did she go about, hardly conscious of his presence apparently—and so slavishly did she follow the directions of the mistress of the house. This new aspect of her had put him in doubt for a while, but it was not very long before he satisfied himself that he understood what it meant; and that little affair with the tea-tray, that was set down to awkwardness by the others, had quite a different significance for him. He flattered himself that she subjected herself to all this restraint for his sake; and whatever the *denouement* might be, the situation was, at all events, an interesting one.

But there was, on the other hand, something in her manner that kept him at a certain distance, and left him in uncertainty as to what line exactly he should take. The same had been the case whenever they had been together out on the island, and had in fact been the principal cause of his becoming more deeply in love with her every day. He had once out there encountered a look in her steel-grey eyes which had given him the impression that the opinion she entertained of him could in a moment be reversed, and that least of all dare he allow her to feel that he was appearing in the character of a lover; and it was for this reason he had scarcely ever talked with her grandfather, and only casually with herself. The fact was, old Jacob had very well understood that the smart young navy-lieutenant did not come out there for his sake; and as he could not very well shut the door in his face, he had very sensibly warned his granddaughter against him. He explained to her that people of his class were not in the habit of marrying a common man's child, although it happened far too often that they might play at love with them. "Such a lad as Salve Kristiansen, now," he remarked, in conclusion, "that is the sort of stuff that will not disappoint you;" and he thought he had played the diplomatist there with some skill.

"I didn't understand you to mean that exactly, grandfather, that time you were going to beat him," she said.

The old man was rather nonplussed for the moment, but he growled out something about youngsters requiring correction occasionally, and went on, "He's a god lad, I tell you; and if he came and made up to you, he should have you without a moment's hesitation; and then I should be easy in my mind as to what would become of you when I'm gone."

Elizabeth made no further observation, but a certain expression about her mouth seemed to denote that she reserved to herself the liberty to have an opinion of her own in this matter. Salve Kristiansen had been very dear to her as the only friend and confidant she had ever had; but since she had seen the lieutenant, it had been he who had exclusively occupied her thoughts. All that had formed the ideal of her young enthusiasm had suddenly in his person appeared upon the rock;

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but whether it was his uniform, or the bravery of the fleet, or himself, that was the object of her admiration, she had never asked herself, until hurt and rendered thoughtful by that warning of her grandfather. Now, it was unmistakably himself, the handsome, brilliant embodiment of it all. But at the same time there sprang up in her nature an unconquerable feeling of pride, in obedience to the dictates of which she absolutely resigned him, though still retaining her enthusiastic admiration; and it was this double attitude of mind which her eyes expressed, and which puzzled her admirer. When she heard afterwards from her aunt in Arendal that people had been talking about them, she felt it deeply, and more than ever then had become sensible that there was an invisible barrier between them.

Carl's father meanwhile had been trudging daily over to the dry-dock to see after the Juno, which had had to have her bottom scraped, her gaping seams caulked, and to undergo a general repair: he was hardly at home to meals. It was a case of urgency, as the delivery of her cargo at its destination could not be delayed beyond a certain time.

About a month after Elizabeth had come into Captain Beck's house the Juno was ready for sea again; and Carl's sister came into the room smiling one day then, and said—

“Elizabeth, there is a young sailor out in the porch who wants to speak to you; he has a parcel under his arm. Perhaps it is a present.”

Elizabeth, who was bringing in the tea-things at the time, turned red, and Carl Beck, who was standing by the window, a little pale. She knew very well that it was Salve, and for a moment she was almost frightened at his audacity. She had seen him a couple of times before, and had allowed him to feel that she was not particularly anxious for his company, in consequence of what her aunt had told her, and as she went out to see him now she trembled.

He looked at her for a moment or two without saying a word.

“Will you take this dress, Elizabeth?” he said at last, almost harshly.

“No, that I won't, Salve. Such things as you have been saying about me!”

“So you won't take it?” he said, slowly and dejectedly. “It is no use saying anything more, then, I suppose.”

“No, Salve, it is no use saying anything more.”

The desolate expression of his face as he stood and looked at her, while he asked, “Am I to take it to sea with me, Elizabeth?” went to her heart, and the tears rushed into her



eyes. She shook her head negatively, but with an almost despairing look, and disappeared into the house.

They could see in the sitting-room that she had been crying. But Carl Beck was a cold-blooded man, and merely lay at the window and looked out after his rival, to see if he had the parcel under his arm as he went out of the gate.



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That night Elizabeth lay awake. She had cried in her sleep, and had dreamed that she had seen Salve standing down at the quay so wretchedly clothed and so miserable, but too proud to ask assistance of any one, and that he had given her such a bitterly reproachful look; and she lay tossing about, unable to get the dream out of her head. Presently there came the noise of a riotous mob outside, and she got up and went to the window. The police were taking some one with them down the street. As they passed, she saw by the light of the street-lamp for a moment that it was Salve. He was resisting with all his might, pale and infuriated, with his blue shirt all torn open in the front, and there was an expression in his face that—at any rate, she slept no more that night.

There had been a general *melee*, she heard next morning, among the sailors over in Mother Andersen's, on the other side of the harbour. It was said that knives had been used, and that Salve Kristiansen had been the originator of the whole disturbance—without a shadow of protest, Carl Beck said; and proceeded then to put various interpretations of his own upon the affair. Elizabeth left the room, and for some days after was pale and worn-looking, and more than usually reserved, Carl thought, in her attitude towards himself.

Captain Beck had paid Salve's fine and procured his release, and the afternoon before the Juno was to sail his father and younger brother came on board to say good-bye to him. There was something strange in his manner that struck them both; it was as if he thought he would never see them again. He offered his father his hundred-daler note, and when the latter would not take it, made him promise, at all events, to keep it for him. The father attributed his unusual manner to distress of mind and depression on account of his recent adventure with the police; but as he was going ashore he said, in rather a husky voice—

“Remember, Salve, that you have an old father expecting you at home!”

That evening and a great part of the night Salve passed in the Juno's maintop, gazing over at Beck's house as long as there was a light in the attic window. And when that went out it seemed as if something had been extinguished in himself with it.

CHAPTER X.

The outer side of Tromoe, which lies off the entrance to Arendal, has only the ordinary barren stone-grey appearance of the rest of the islands along the coast; a wooden church, with a little belfry like a sentry-box and serving as a landmark, which lies drearily down by the sea, and under which on Sundays a pilot-boat or two may be seen lying-to while service is going on, is the only feature for the eye to rest upon. The land side of the island, on the contrary, presents a scene all the richer and livelier for the contrast.

The narrow Tromoe Sound, with its swarm of small coasters, lighters, pilot-boats, and vessels of larger build,

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suns itself there between fertile or wooded slopes and ridges, over which are scattered in every direction the red cottages of the sailor population, skippers' houses, and villas; and in every available spot, in every creek or bay where there is barely room for a vessel, the white timbers of ships in course of construction come into view. It is an idyllic dockyard, a very beautiful and very appropriate approach to Norway's principal seaport town; and whoever steams up it on a still summer's day must enjoy a surprise that will not easily be effaced from his recollection.

At the period of our story, indeed, the picture was far from being so complete or rich: but even then were becoming manifest the germs of the bustle and life which now pervade the place.

On one of the most beautiful points of the Sound peeped into view a small one-storeyed house with two small-paned attic windows projecting from its steep tiled roof, and with a pine-wood climbing the hillside behind, which was the property of Captain Beck; and here, until, as he proposed to do in a couple of years' time, he retired from the sea and invested his fortune in the shipbuilding yard which he had in view, his family generally took up their residence during the summer months. Hither in the early part of this summer, too, they had repaired.

It was no life of idleness, though, which they lived out there: Madam Beck always made work for everybody, and had her own spinning-wheel in the sitting-room. Her step-son had his occupation on land, and as much as he could do, as member of the coast commission. But he used generally to come over on Saturdays in his pretty sail-boat and remain over Sunday; and on that day, too, some one or other family of their acquaintance in the town would make them an object for a pleasure party, and would usually spend the afternoon with them.

Carl Beck was always in great force on these occasions. His brown face and frank sailor bearing and good looks would have been sufficient in themselves to make him a favourite with the ladies. But, in addition to these claims upon their interest, he had been known to most of the younger ones among them from his schoolboy days, when he used to come home on leave as a cadet, and he seemed to enjoy particular confidential relations with nearly every one of them, or, at all events, to be in possession of some secret or other which only they two knew. They had all kinds of jokes and expressions from their younger days which were unintelligible to the rest; and what is vulgarly called "chaff" formed, perhaps, the staple of his conversation with them, varied now and then by a touch of sentiment, which was intended, by chance as it were, to open up to them for a moment the real deeper nature which they might not have suspected him of possessing. They used to twit him about his inclination to stoutness, and he used to joke about it too, and say he had too good a time of it.



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Among the Becks' most frequent visitors out there was postmaster Forstberg's family, which included, besides the parents, a hobbledehoy son and their daughter Marie, a fair-haired girl some eighteen years of age, of quiet manners, and with an uncommonly clever face. Nobody said that she was pretty, but nearly every one who knew her had the impression that she was; and there was a certain indefinable harmony and grace, not only about her perhaps rather small figure, but about everything she did. But if she was not considered pretty, it was agreed on all sides that she had great sense; and among her friends she was always the one they elected to confide in, whenever they had anything on their minds. That she never confided anything to them in return had, curiously enough, never struck them; and for that matter, she was too correct and proper, they imagined, to have any heart affairs herself. She was a confidential friend of Carl Beck's sisters, and especially of Mina, who declared that she put her before all the rest of her acquaintance, and thought in her own heart that she was exactly the match for her brother.

The only one of the young girls in the circle with whom Carl Beck had had no youthful acquaintance was Marie Forstberg; and it had been some time before he discovered that the quiet girl was worth talking to. He used to be secretly annoyed then that the conversation when she was present should lapse so easily into empty trifling; her mind was so clear and true, and she had such a beautiful smile for whatever she approved. Before her, therefore, he always displayed now the broad, manly side of his character—which he could do with so much grace—and the coquetry which was at the bottom of this was not without its effect. She had always made rather a hero of him in her own mind, and he had created the flattering impression now that the light and flirting manner which he adopted towards young ladies, and which had rather qualified her admiration of him, had been due to his not having before found among them any one that was worthy of a man's serious attention. He had begun consequently to occupy a much larger share of her thoughts than she would herself have been willing to acknowledge; and many of the confidences of which she was the recipient at this time would, if her friends had had a little more penetration, have been brought last of all to her.

Marie Forstberg's attention had very soon been attracted to Elizabeth; and knowing her history, she tried very often to help her, and put her in the right way of doing things. At first she found her rather short and unapproachable, and could get nothing but "yes" or "no" from her; and there was something almost offensive in the brusque way in which she would turn with an impatient flush from her mentor when she sometimes didn't understand what was meant, and would do the thing in her own way. She wouldn't see at first the various little good turns which the other did her in her quiet, considerate



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way; but they were acknowledged at last with a look that made amends for all her former obtuseness; and in spite of their different natures and unequal social position, these two women soon came to feel, if not exactly drawn to one another, mutually interested in each other. At the same time, as Elizabeth was not blind to the diplomacy of the house, she had soon perceived that of all the young ladies who came there, Marie Forstberg was the one who had the best chance, and who indeed best deserved to be the young lieutenant's bride; and although she tried to believe that she was merely a resigned looker-on herself, she seemed to feel every Sunday, when Marie Forstberg came, that a certain disagreeable impression had grown up in her mind about her during the week which it took some time to thaw. When it did thaw, however, which in time it always did, she would feel attracted to her with redoubled warmth; and though their conversation might be ostensibly occupied only with such subjects as laying the table or dishing the dinner, she would contrive to introduce into it anything and everything concerning the lieutenant which she thought might interest or recommend him to her friend. Marie Forstberg couldn't help sometimes fixing her clear blue eyes searchingly upon her, to ascertain if there was not some object underlying this communicativeness; but Elizabeth would look so unconscious, as she stood there with her sleeves tucked up, busy with her work, that she dismissed the idea from her mind.

In this country life, although without a moment to call her own, Elizabeth felt freer at all events than she had done in the town; and she had made such rapid progress under Madam Beck's tuition, that the latter's supervision was in many things no longer required. One part in particular, the one which she might have been expected to find the most difficult of all—that of parlour-maid—she filled to perfection; and her upright figure and expressive face attracted many an admiring glance on Sundays, when in her becoming striped chintz dress and white apron, and with her luxuriant hair turned up in the simplest manner, she carried the tea or coffee things out to the guests in the summer-house. She could feel that Carl Beck's eyes were never off her as long as she was in sight, and she seemed to know that it was she whom his eye wandered in search of first whenever he came home. In a hundred small ways he made her conscious of the interest which he felt in her; and whenever there was a commission to be particularly remembered, he never gave it to his sisters alone, but to her also.

His pretty pleasure-boat—a long, light, sharp-built yawl, with a red stripe along its black side, and two sloping masts—which he had lately had built, lay often the whole week through moored in the bay under the house. He was very particular about the boat, and during his absence it was to Elizabeth's sole care that she was intrusted. There was always something or other to be looked after; and when he came home he would generally subject her, in a jokingly harsh tone, to an examination, which he called holding a summary court-martial.



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Sometimes on Saturdays he would come up the path waving in his hand a letter covered with post-marks. It would be from his father to his stepmother; and Madam Beck would generally read it by herself first, and then it would be read aloud, Elizabeth listening with strained attention—she was always so afraid that there might be something bad about Salve.

One Sunday she remarked that Carl wore in the buttonhole of his uniform a wild flower which she had thrown away. It might have been the purest accident; but she knew that he had seen her with it in her hand. The same day they had wild strawberries at dinner, and there were no strangers, and he broke out all in a moment, “Yes, I’d sooner ten thousand times have wild strawberries than garden ones. They have quite another taste and smell.”

It was a natural remark for any one to make. But she thought he had looked with peculiar earnestness at her as he made it, and afterwards he had fixed his eyes upon his plate for a long while without raising them. She felt that the remark had been meant for her, and altogether that day there was something about him that made her uneasy—he gazed at her so often.

Madame Beck happened to have just then a long list of household necessaries required from Arendal, and Carl said that if some one would go with him in the boat the next morning to help him with the parcels, he would execute her commissions himself. When Madame Beck suggested Elizabeth he eagerly assented; but the colour rushed into Elizabeth’s cheeks, and with an angry toss of her head, which she didn’t make any attempt to conceal, she left the room.

As he was standing alone outside some little time after, she came up to him, and said, looking him straight in the face—

“I don’t go into Arendal with you, Herr Beck.”

“No?—and why not, Elizabeth?” he asked, with affected indifference, and trying to meet her look.

“I don’t go,” she repeated, her voice trembling with pride and anger—“that is all I have to say;” and she turned from him, and left him gazing after her, partly in confusion, and partly in admiration of the magnificently proud way in which she crossed the turf to the house again.

The expedition was given up; and in spite of Carl’s *finesse*, it came out inadvertently that it was on account of Elizabeth having refused to go alone in the boat with him, which Madam Beck found very commendable on her part. Indeed she ought to have known herself, she said, that it was scarcely proper; but at the same time, she was



decidedly of opinion that the more becoming course for Elizabeth would have been to speak to her mistress first.

CHAPTER XI.

The house in the town was undergoing repairs this year, which kept the family out in the country until rather late in the autumn. But the glorious September days prolonged the summer, and they could still sit out on the steps in the evening and enjoy the beauty and the sentiment of the season, and the rich variety of the autumn tints reflected on the still waters of the Sound.



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The members of Carl's commission, with their president, were invited out there one day, and it was made a great occasion, all the resources of the house being brought into requisition to do them honour.

Carl, although the youngest member of the Commission, and really only included in it to make up the required number, had been fortunate enough to distinguish himself upon it; and his sisters even thought that there might be a question of an order for him—that distinction so coveted in Norway—if they made love sufficiently to the president. Carl professed to be quite superior to a mere external decoration of the kind, though longing for it in his heart; and Marie Forstberg, whom he had not taken into his confidence in the matter, was highly indignant with his sisters for supposing that it should depend upon the president, and not upon Carl's own merit, whether he received it or not. Mina, however, had declared, with a great air of knowledge of the world, that people couldn't trust to merit alone, and that, besides (and here she had laid her hand flatteringly on her friend's shoulder), they were not all so strict and high-principled as Marie Forstberg; and so she paid her court to the president accordingly.

In the evening, when the gentlemen were sitting together out in the wood, and Elizabeth came out to them with a fresh supply of hot water for their toddy, the said president thought proper to make a joke that brought the colour to her cheeks. She made no reply, but the water-jug trembled in her hands as she put it down, and as she did so she gave the speaker such a look that for a moment he felt cowed.

"Sdeath, Beck!" he broke out, "did you see the look she gave me?"

"She is a proud girl," said Carl, who was highly incensed, but who had his reasons for restraining himself before his superior.

"A proud girl indeed!" returned the other, in a tone which implied very clearly that in his opinion impudent hussy would have been the more correct description.

"A good-looking girl, I mean," said Carl, evasively, by way of correction, and laughed constrainedly.

Elizabeth had heard what he said. She was hurt, and for the first time instituted a comparison between him and Salve. If Salve had been in his place, he would not have got out of it in that way.

Later on in the evening Carl met her alone, as she was putting things to rights out on the steps after the departed guests, and he said half-anxiously—

"I hope you didn't mind what that blustering old brute said, Elizabeth. He is a very good fellow really, and doesn't mean anything by his nonsense."



Elizabeth was silent, and tried to avoid answering by going in with what she had in her hands.

“Come, I won’t stand your being offended, Elizabeth,” he broke out suddenly, firing up in a moment, and trying to catch her by the arm. “That hand you work with is dearer to me than the hands of all the fine ladies put together.”



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“Herr Beck!” she exclaimed wildly, and with tears in her eyes, “I leave this house—this very night—if you say a word more.”

She disappeared into the hall, but he followed her.

“Elizabeth,” he whispered, “I mean it in earnest.” She tore herself hastily from him, and went into the kitchen, where his sisters were talking together over the fire.

Carl went out for a solitary walk over the island in the glorious starlight night, and didn’t come in till past midnight.

He had not meant what he said quite so decidedly in earnest; but now after seeing her standing before him so wondrously beautiful, with tears in her eyes—now he meant it in real earnest. He was prepared to engage himself, if necessary, in spite of every consideration.

The next morning he left in his boat for Arendal, having whispered to her, however, in passing, before he left, “I mean it in earnest.”

The repetition of these words threw Elizabeth into dire perplexity. She had lain and thought over them the night before, and had thrust them from her with indignation, for they could mean nothing else than that he had brought himself to dare to tell her that he had conceived a passion for her, and she had quite determined to execute her threat and leave the house.

But now, repeated in this tone!

Did he really mean to ask for her hand and heart—to ask her to be his—an officer’s wife? There lay before her fancy a glittering expanse of earlier dreams that almost made her giddy; and the whole week she was absent and pale, thinking anxiously of Sunday, when he was to return. What would he say then?

And—what should she answer?

He didn’t come, however, his duties having required him to make another journey that he had not reckoned upon.

On the other hand Marie Forstberg did appear, and felt at once that some change or other must have come over Elizabeth, as she pointedly declined all assistance from her; and in the look which Marie Forstberg intercepted by chance, there was something even hard and unfriendly. She laid her hand once gently upon Elizabeth’s shoulder, but it produced, apparently, absolutely no impression—she might as well have caressed a piece of wood; and when she returned to the sitting-room again, she couldn’t help asking, “What has happened to Elizabeth?” But the others had not observed anything unusual.



Carl Beck, contrary to his custom, came not on the following Saturday, but before it, in the middle of the week; and he strode with hasty steps through the rooms when he didn't see Elizabeth.

He found her at last up-stairs. She was standing gazing out of the window on the landing, out of which all that was to be seen was the wooded slope of the hill and the sky above it. She heard his step—she knew that he was coming up-stairs—and felt a sudden indefinable sense of apprehension—a sort of panic almost—as if she could have jumped out of the window. What should she answer?



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When he came and put his arm round her waist, and asked in a low voice, "Elizabeth, will you be mine?" she felt, for the first time in her life, on the point of fainting. She hardly knew what she did, but pushed him involuntarily away from her.

He seized her hand afresh, and asked, "Elizabeth, will you be my wife?"

She was very pale, as she answered—"Yes!"

But when he wanted again to take her by the waist, she sprang suddenly back, and looked at him with an expression of terror.

"Elizabeth!" he said, tenderly, and tried again to approach her, "what is the matter with you? If you only knew how I have longed for this moment."

"Not now—no more now!" she pleaded, holding out her hand to him. "Another time."

"But you say 'Yes,' Elizabeth—that you are my—?" But he felt that she wanted him to go now.

After he had gone, she sat there on a box for a long time in silence, gazing straight before her.

So it had actually come to pass! Her heart beat so that she could hear it herself, and she seemed to feel a dull pain there. Her face, little by little, acquired a fixed, cold expression: she was thinking that he was then telling his stepmother of their engagement, and fortifying himself for her reception of the announcement.

She expected to be called down. But no summons came; and at last she decided to go without being called.

In the sitting-room they were all quietly intent upon their several occupations. Carl was pretending to read a book; but he threw her a stolen, tenderly anxious look over the top of it when she entered.

Supper was brought in, and everything went on as quietly as usual, even to his customary banter. To Elizabeth it seemed as if there was a mist over them all; and when Mina once asked if there was anything the matter with her, she could only answer mechanically, 'No.' The question was repeated later on, and received the same answer. She brought the supper things in and took them out, as usual, and it seemed as if she could not feel the floor under her feet, or what she carried in her hand.

The evening passed, and they went to bed without anything happening. But in the partial darkness of the stair-landing, he seized her hand passionately, and said—"Good-night, my Elizabeth, *my—my* Elizabeth!"



She was not in a condition to return the pressure of his hand, and when he approached his lips to her forehead, she hastily drew herself away.

“I came out here alone to tell you this, dear, dearest Elizabeth,” he whispered, with passion trembling in his voice, and making an effort to draw her to him. “I must be on land again to-morrow. Must I go without one sign that you care for me?”

She bent her forehead slowly towards him, and he kissed it, and she then immediately left him.

“Good-night, my beloved one!” he whispered after her.



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Elizabeth lay for a long while awake. She would have given anything to have been able to cry, but the tears would not come; and she felt as if she was freezing internally. When at last she did fall asleep, it was not of him she dreamt, but of Salve—the whole time of Salve. She saw him gazing at her with that earnest face—it was so heavy with grief, and she stood like a criminal before him. He said something that she could not hear, but she understood that he condemned her, and that he had thrown the dress overboard.

She rose early, and tried to occupy her thoughts with other dreams—with her future as an officer's lady. But it was as if all that had before seemed to be pure gold was now changed to brass. She felt unhappy and restless; and it was a long time before she could make up her mind to go into the sitting-room.

Carl Beck did not leave that morning. He had perceived that there was something on Elizabeth's mind.

During the forenoon, when his sisters were out, and his stepmother was occupied, he found an opportunity to speak with her alone: she was in a fever, always waiting for him to have spoken to Madam Beck.

"Elizabeth," he said, gently smoothing her hair, for she looked dispirited, and stood with her eyes fixed upon the ground, "I couldn't leave without having spoken to you again."

She still kept her eyes upon the ground, but didn't withdraw herself from his hand.

"Do you really care for me?—will you be my wife?"

She was silent. At last she said, a shade paler, and as if with an effort—

"Yes—Herr Beck."

"Say 'du' to me—say Carl," he pleaded, with much feeling, "and—look at me."

She looked at him, but not as he had expected. It was with a fixed, cold look she said —

"Yes, if we are engaged."

"Are we not then?"

"When is your stepmother to know it?" she asked, rather dragging the words out one after the other.

"Dear Elizabeth! These people at home here must notice nothing for—for three months, when I shall be—" But he caught an expression now in her face, and something in the



abrupt way in which she drew her hand from him, that made him keep back what he had originally intended to say, and he corrected it hastily.

“Next week, then, I’ll write from Arendal and tell my father, and then let my stepmother know what I have written. Are you offended, Elizabeth—dear Elizabeth? or shall I do it at once?” he broke out resolutely, and seized her hand again.

“No, no—not now! next week—let it not be till next week,” she cried, in sudden apprehension, returning the pressure of his hand at the same time almost entreatingly—it was the first he had had from her.

“And then you are mine, Elizabeth?”

“Yes, then”—she tried to avoid meeting his eye.

“Farewell, then, Elizabeth! But I shall come back on Saturday. I can’t live for longer without seeing you.”



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“Farewell!” she said, in a rather toneless voice.

He sprang down to the boat that lay waiting for him below; but she didn't look after him, and went in with bowed head the opposite way.

Small things often weigh heavily in the world of impressions. Elizabeth had been overpowered by what seemed to her the magnanimity of his nature when he had declared that he would elevate her into the position of his wife; she felt that it was her worth in his eyes which had outweighed all other considerations. That he should shrink from the inevitable conflict with his family she had on the other hand never for a moment imagined. She had no doubt felt herself that it would be painful, but had stationed herself for the occasion behind his masculine shield. When he now so unexpectedly began to press for time, at first even proposing to be away himself when the matter came on in his home, a feeling took possession of her which in her inward dread she instinctively clutched at as a drowning wretch at a straw, as it seemed to suggest a possibility even now of reconsidering her promise.

She had a hard and heavy time of it during the two days until Carl returned; and the nights were passed in fever.

On Saturday evening he came, and the first he greeted was herself: he seemed almost, as she passed in and out of the room quiet and pale, as if he didn't wish any longer to conceal the relations now existing between them.

He had with him a letter from his father, which was read aloud when the meal was over. It was dated from a South American port, and mention was made in it of Salve among others. Off Cape Hatteras they had had stormy weather, and had their topmast carried away. It remained attached by a couple of ropes, and with the heavy sea that was running, was swinging backwards and forwards, as it hung, against the lower rigging, threatening to destroy it. Salve Kristiansen had come forward in the emergency and ventured aloft to cut it adrift; and as he sat there the whole had gone over the side. He fell with it, but had the luck to be caught in a top-lift as he fell, and so saved his life. “It was pluckily done,” ended the account, “but nevertheless all is not exactly right about him, and he is not turning out as well as he promised.”

“I never expected very much from him,” remarked Carl, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders; “he's a bad lot.”

He didn't see the resentful eyes which Elizabeth fixed upon him for these words, and she sat for a long while afterwards out in the kitchen with her hands in her lap, silent and angry, thinking over them. A resolution was forming in her mind.

Before they retired to rest, Carl whispered to her—



“I have written to my father to-day, and—to-morrow, Elizabeth, is our betrothal-day!”

Elizabeth was the last in the room, putting it to rights, and when she left she took a sheet of paper and writing materials with her. She lay down on her bed; but about midnight she was sitting up by a light and disfiguring a sheet of paper with writing. It was to this effect:—



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“Forgive me that I cannot be your wife, for my heart is given to another.—Elizabeth Raklev.”

She folded the paper and fastened it with a pin for want of a wafer, and then quietly opening the door of the room where Madam Beck was sleeping, placed her lips close to her ear, and whispered her name. Madam Beck woke up in some alarm when she saw Elizabeth standing before her fully dressed, and apparently prepared for a journey.

“Madam Beck,” Elizabeth said, quietly, “I am going to confide something to you, and ask for your advice and assistance. Your step-son has asked me to be his wife. It was last Sunday—and I said yes; but now I have changed my mind, and am going back to my aunt, or farther away still, if you can tell me how; for I am afraid he will follow me.”

Madam Beck stared at her in mute amazement, and at first put on an incredulous and rather scornful expression; but as she came to feel that it might all be true, she raised herself involuntarily higher up in the bed.

“But—why do you come with this now, particularly in the middle of the night?” she said, with a suspicious and searching look.

“Because he has written to his father about it to-day, and means to tell you and the rest to-morrow.”

“So—he has already written? That was his object, then, in bringing you into the house here,” Madam Beck added, after a pause, with some bitterness.

It seemed to strike her then that there was something noble in Elizabeth’s conduct; and looking at her more kindly, she said—

“Yes, you are right. It is best for you to go away—to some place where he will not find it so easy to reach you.”

She lapsed into thought again. Then a brilliant idea occurred to her, and she got up and put on her clothes. She had a man’s clearheadedness, and her habits of management stood her in good stead on the present occasion. The Dutch skipper Garvloit, who had married her half-sister, happened just a day or two before to have been inquiring for a Norwegian girl, who would be able to help in the house; and here was just the place for Elizabeth. She had only to go on board his vessel, that lay over at Arendal ready to sail.

Madam Beck went into the sitting-room at once, and wrote a letter to Garvloit, which she gave to Elizabeth, together with a good round sum of money—wages due, she said; and half-an-hour afterwards Elizabeth was rowing over alone in the quiet moonlight night to Arendal.



The smooth sound lay full of shining stars between the deep shadows of the ridges on either side, with a light from a mast here and there denoting the presence of vessels under the land. A falling star would now and then leave a stream of light behind it; and she felt a sense of joyous exultation that she could only subdue by rowing hard for long spells. She was like one escaped—relieved from some oppressive burden. And how she looked forward to seeing Marie Forstberg now!



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She arrived in the town before daybreak, and went straight up to her aunt's, to whom she announced that Madam Beck wished her to take a place in Holland with Garvloit, who was on the point of sailing. She showed her the letter—there was no time to lose.

The old woman listened to her for a while, and then said abruptly—

“There has been some difficulty with the lieutenant, Elizabeth?”

“Yes, aunt, there has,” she replied; “he made love to me.”

“He did—”

“And first I said as good as yes. But I don't mean to have him—and so I told Madam Beck.”

“So you wouldn't have him?” was the rejoinder, after an astonished pause; “and the reason, I suppose, was that you would rather have Salve?”

“Yes, aunt,” in a low voice.

“And why in the world didn't you take him, then?”

The tears came into Elizabeth's eyes.

“Well—as people make their beds so they must lie,” said the old woman, severely—and betook herself then, without any further observation, to the preparation of the morning coffee.

As Elizabeth went down to the quay, to get a boat to take her out to the merchantman, she looked in at the post-office, where she found Marie Forstberg already up, and busy in the sitting-room in her morning dress. She was greatly astonished when Elizabeth told her of her new destination.

It was such an advantageous offer, Elizabeth explained—an almost independent place in the house; and Madam Beck had herself advised her to take it.

But though she used all her wit to keep the other off the scent, Marie Forstberg found a want of connection somewhere, and Elizabeth could see it in her eyes. She asked no further questions, however; and when they took leave of each other they embraced, in tears.

Out at Tromoe the surprise was great when it was found that Elizabeth had gone. Carl Beck had found her letter under the door, but had never imagined that she had left, and had gone out with it in violent agitation of mind and did not come home again till late in the afternoon. Madam Beck had in the meantime confided the matter to her daughters,



and they would understand, she said, that not a word of it must be mentioned outside the house.

Although his eyes sought for her unceasingly, Carl made no express inquiry after her till the evening, and when he heard that she was gone, and was perhaps by that time already under sail for Holland, he sat for awhile as if petrified. Looking scornfully at them then, one after another, he said—

“If I thought that I had any of you to thank for this, I’d—” here he seized the chair he had been sitting on, dashed it down upon the floor so that it broke, and sprang up-stairs.

But her letter was unfortunately clear enough—she loved another, and he knew, too, who it was.

CHAPTER XII.



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It was some months after. The Juno lay ready to sail in the roads of Monte Video, where she had taken in hides as part of her home cargo. The remainder, of coffee, she was to load at Rio, and in the meantime she had filled up with coals for that port. She was lying in tropical costume, with awnings over the fore and after deck as a protection against the fierce rays of the sun; and the crew were going about in correspondingly airy clothing, with open shirts and tucked-up canvas trousers, brown and shiny with perspiration, and gasping after every breath. It was the hottest season of the year. The pitch was melting in the chinks between the planking of the decks, and the tar running down her sides.

They had lain thus for a couple of days, hoping to receive before starting the post, which they had been disappointed in not finding on their arrival. And what a disappointment this can be, only those who have been in one of these ships that go on long voyages can understand. In foreign ports there may be many a wild pleasure to be enjoyed, but the longing to hear from home is the strongest feeling among sailors after all.

The mate had gone ashore to make one last inquiry before they sailed; and as the jolly-boat came alongside again, it was seen that he had the precious packet in his hand. He sprang up the accommodation-ladder and disappeared aft without a word to where the captain was sitting by a small table with a carafe and glass before him, mopping his bald head in the heat.

“You’ve got them at last, then,” he said, as the mate laid the packet on the table before him, and retired a few paces while he opened it.

Almost the first letter that caught his eye was one to himself from his son, and his face brightened. He ran rapidly over the others, making a comment here and there according as he was acquainted with the circumstances of the men to whom they were addressed, and gathering them up in a bundle, handed them over then to the mate, with a cheery “Here you are, Mr. Johnson—letters for every one, from wives and sweethearts, and I don’t know whom besides.”

The news that the post had come had spread like wildfire over the ship, and by the time the mate began to call out the addresses by the main hatch, the whole crew were assembled, with the exception of a straggler or two who had happened to be aloft, and who were now to be seen hurrying down the ratlines.

The only one who neither expected news, nor cared apparently whether he received a letter or not, was Salve Kristiansen. While the parcel was being distributed, he remained standing by the wheel, intent apparently upon watching the movements of the two men who were hoisting up and making fast the jolly-boat. His lips were compressed; and when he gave the men a hand now and then, it was not a very willing one, and was generally accompanied by some bitter or sarcastic remark. His nature since they last sailed from



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Arendal seemed to have turned to gall; and when the captain had casually mentioned in his letter home that he was not so well satisfied with him, he had had good reason for saying so. There had been all sorts of unpleasantness between them; and if any discontent or difference between himself and the crew prevailed, Salve was sure to be at the bottom of it. He had found a rancid salt-herring, set up on four legs with a tail, as he was walking on the poop one evening in the moonlight; and as complaints had been recently made about the food, a good deal of which had become worse than bad from the effects of the hot climate, he had at once attributed to Salve this pointed method of drawing his attention to the subject again. It seemed almost as if he had some cause for bitterness against himself personally; and as he had always treated him with marked favour, he was at a loss to comprehend the reason for it.

With the exception of the captain, who had retained his seat at the after-end of the poop, Salve was soon the only human being to be seen on deck. The whole crew had disappeared, and might have been found poring over their letters two and two, or singly, in the most out-of-the-way places, from the main and fore top even to the bowsprit end, where one had erected a pavilion for himself out of a fold of the hauled-down jib.

Captain Beck's letter, to judge from his gestures and half-audible exclamations, was not giving him the pleasure which he had anticipated. His whole face, up to the top of his head, had become red as a lobster, and he sat now drumming with one hand on his knee, and casting an occasional fierce look over at Salve, in the attitude of a man beside himself with anger. At last he brought the hand in which he held the letter down upon the table with a force that sent the decanter and glass flying, and thrusting the fragments aside with his foot, he strode up and down the deck for a couple of minutes and then came towards Salve as if he meant to say something; and as the latter could very well perceive that it was not going to be anything pleasant, his countenance assumed an expression of defiance accordingly. He changed his mind, though, before he reached him, and turning short round shouted instead—

“Where is the second mate? Where is the whole watch?” and he looked furiously about him, as if surprised, although he knew very well how they were occupied, and that it had been decided not to weigh anchor until later in the day, when they would have the evening breeze.

“Ay, ay, sir!” was heard from the mate in the long-boat; and he raised himself and came forward with the letter he had been reading in his hand.

“Stand by to man the windlass! Pipe all hands!” ordered the captain, and roared the command again gratuitously through the trumpet.



The crew turned out from their several retreats with sour looks. They had expected to be left alone until after tea-time, when there would have been a general interchange of news on the fore-castle; and now there came instead a hail of orders from the speaking-trumpet, as if the captain had all of a sudden become possessed.



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There was already a good deal of discontent prevailing among the crew, both on account of the bad food which they had to put up with, and on account of their leave ashore at Monte Video having been, as they thought, capriciously refused; and it was therefore something more nearly approaching to a howl than a song that was now heard from the capstan and from the party who were hoisting the heavy mainsail. The customary English chorus—

“Haul the bowline,
The captain he is growling;
Haul the bowline,
The bowline haul”—

was sung with offensive significance; and though, at the last heavy heave with which the enormous anchor was catted up to the bows, the mate tried to create a diversion in the feeling by a cheery “Saat ‘kjelimen—hal’ paa,” the concluding words of the song—

“Aa hal i—aa—iaa—
Cheerily, men!”—

were delivered in a scornful shout.

“You’ll have a chance of cooling yourselves presently, my lads,” said Salve, coming up at the moment from his own heavy work with the cross-jack; “when we weather the point, all the lee-sails have to be set”—and the remark had the effect which he desired of intensifying the prevailing irritation.

In spite of the vertical heat, the hail of orders from the captain’s trumpet continued, accompanied by reprimands and fault-finding all round, until the crew were nearly in a state of mutiny, and it was not until late in the evening that he showed any signs of exhaustion.

His temper had not improved next day. He looked as if he had a determination of blood to the head; and every time he came near Salve, he glared at him as if it was all he could do to control himself from an outburst of some kind or another. He knew that Salve had made love to Elizabeth, and had wished to make her presents since she had come into his house; and that the same girl was now to be his son’s wife—the idea was absolutely intolerable!

At last he could contain himself no longer. Salve had just deposited a coil of rope aft, and the captain, after watching his movements with evidently suppressed irritation, broke out suddenly, without preface of any kind—

“You, I believe, had some acquaintance with that—that Elizabeth Raklev I took into my house.”



Salve felt the blood rush to his heart. He seemed to know what was coming.

“The post,” the captain continued, in a bitterly contemptuous tone, “has brought me the delightful intelligence that my son has engaged himself to her.”

“Congratulate you, captain,” said Salve. His voice almost failed him, and he was deadly pale, but his eyes flashed with a wild defiance.

He went forward, and the captain growled after him to himself, “He can have that to fret over now instead of the food;” and as the mate was coming up the cabin stairs at the moment polishing the sextant, he turned away with a look of grim satisfaction to take the altitude.

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When the Juno last sailed from Arendal she had changed two of her crew. One of the new hands was a square-built, coarse-featured, uncouth-looking creature, from the fjord region north of Stavanger, who called himself Nils Buvaagen, but whose name had been changed by the others to Uvaagen (not-awake), on account of his evident predisposition to sleep. He was incredibly *naive* and communicative, especially on the subject of his wife and children (of which latter he apparently had his nest full), and had soon become the butt of the ship. Salve was the only one who ever took his part, and that only because he saw all the others against him; and having also been the means of saving his life when he had been washed overboard one dark night in the English Channel, he had inspired the simple fellow with a perfectly devoted attachment to him.

They were up on the mainyard together that evening, where they had been helping to carry out an order with the mainsail. The rest had gone down again, but Salve, who felt a longing to be alone, had remained aloft, and was standing on the foot-rope, with his elbows resting on the yard. Nils's sympathetic eyes had perceived from his behaviour and whole appearance that day that there was something unusual the matter with him; and when he saw that Salve remained behind, he remained too, observing that it would be pleasant to cool for a while before going to their hammocks in the close air between decks.

The sky above them blazed like a cupola "inlaid with patines of bright gold;" obliquely from the horizon the Southern Cross was rising, and the evening star shone in the warm night, before the moon had yet risen, with a silver gleam that threw clear light and shadow upon the deck below; while the vessel seemed to plough through a sea of phosphorescence, leaving in her wake a long trail of bluish glittering light.

From the forecastle below came wafted up a sentimental sailor's song, the burden of which was pretty well summed up in the two concluding lines:—

"But never more her name I'll utter till I die,
For rosy though her lips were, her heart it was a lie."

It sounded melancholy at that hour, and Nils, to judge from the occasional sighs with which he had accompanied it, was moved. When it came to an end, Salve turned suddenly to him.

"You are distressing yourself for another's sweetheart now, Nils. What would you have done if it had been your own?"

"My wife!" He had evidently not for the moment taken in the idea, and looked with all his heavy countenance at Salve.

"Yes. Wouldn't you have liked to see her sunk to the bottom of the sea?"



“My Karen to the bottom of the sea! I’d go there myself first.”

“Yes; but if she had been unfaithful to you?” persisted Salve, seeming to take a fiendish delight in bringing home the idea to the poor fellow.

“But she is not,” was the rejoinder.



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Nils had no genius for the abstract, and no more satisfaction was to be got out of him. But at the same time he had been shocked, and went down shortly after without saying a word.

Salve still remained aloft, the dull consciousness of Elizabeth's engagement with the captain's son alternating with a more active desire for revenge upon the captain himself for the manner in which he had conveyed the information; and the result of his brooding up there upon the yard was a determination to desert as soon as the Juno arrived at Rio. He would never go back to Arendal; and he would no longer tread the same deck with the father of Carl Beck.

Later on in the night, when the moon had risen, Nils, who had not been able to sleep in his hammock, came up to Salve again, and drew him aside behind the round-house, as if for a private conversation.

"What would I have done? you asked. I'll tell you," he said, after a short pause, and his honest face seemed to express a vivid realisation of the whole misery of the situation. "I would have died upon the doorstep!"

Salve stood and looked at him for a moment. There came a strange pallor over his face in the moonlight.

"Look you," he said, ironically, laying his hand upon the other's shoulder, "I have never a wife; but all the same, I am dead upon the doorstep—" Then, in the next breath, and with a sudden change of tone, he said, "Of course I am only joking, you know," and left him, with a hard, forced laugh.

Nils remained where he was, and pondered, not knowing exactly how to take it. It was possible Salve had only been making fun of him. But another feeling eventually predominated. It told him that he had had a glimpse into a despairing soul; and he was profoundly moved.

CHAPTER XIII.

They stood slowly away to the north-east along the coast of Brazil. Every morning, towards the end of the dog-watch, when the sun rose in its gorgeous majesty from the sea, there came a refreshing breeze off the land, bringing with it the perfume of a thousand aromatic herbs; albatrosses and sea-gulls circled round the ship; flying-fish were to be seen in shoals; and all nature, animate and inanimate, seemed to be freshened for the time into activity and life. But gradually the breeze would become warmer and lighter, and then die away altogether, so that before noon the sails would hang flapping against the mast. They scarcely made five knots in the watch, and the heat during the greater part of the day was unbearable—as unbearable almost as the

captain's temper, which showed no signs of improvement, and which vented itself in a systematic grinding of the crew, who, Captain Beck declared, were getting into intolerable habits of idleness.



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Strange things occurred on board just at this time, which, taken in connection with the captain's mood, produced an uncomfortable feeling that there was some evil influence at work by which both the ship and the captain were possessed. Groans had been distinctly heard down in the hold among the coals; and the sailmaker affirmed that on several nights in succession he had seen a man go from amidships aft along the bulwark railings, stand still and point with his hand to the compass, and then disappear in the wake of the ship. Another declared that he had seen the ship's genius proceed in the same direction and jump overboard—cap and all he was no higher than a half sea-boot; and when the genius deserts a ship, it betokens in the sailors' superstitious creed that she is about to founder.

The unaccountable sounds in the hold continued, and changed one day when the hatch was battened down to a kind of wail, which ceased, however, when, for fear of an explosion of coal-gas, it was taken off again. On the following day the cook, who had gone down for water, came hurrying back with a scared face, and declared that he had seen a man sitting there in a red jacket.

"It is the ship's genius lamenting the ship," was hesitatingly suggested by some. But when the cook objected that the creature was at least as large as Big Anders the boatswain, and proceeded besides to endow him with sable colouring and claws, the terror reached its height.

The captain had hitherto replied to these, as he conceived them, fresh attempts to provoke him, by still further grinding; but when this last observation of the cook was communicated to him, he broke out scornfully, pointing at the same time with the bitten mouthpiece of his old meerschaum pipe at the speaker—

"I think there is a sufficiently stupid devil in the hold sticking in every one of you rascals. Isn't there one of you with courage enough to go down into the coal-hold? or must I go myself?"

The first mate proposed to accompany him; but Salve now came forward and declared that he, for his part, would as soon go down into the hold as up aloft. "A man won't sweat half as much at that work," he added, with sarcastic significance.

He went down accordingly with a light, and after a few moments' search came upon a miserable, half-famished wretch, who had squeezed himself in behind the water-butt. He was as black as a negro from the coal-dust, and declared tremblingly when he came up on deck, that he had deserted from his regiment in Monte Video, which was an offence punishable by death, and that he had thought he might remain concealed until the vessel arrived at Rio; that he had come on board in the dark on the last evening they lay in the harbour, and had hidden himself under the coals; and that when they had battened down the hatch he had been nearly suffocated with coal-gas, and had lain and groaned. Occasionally he had found an opportunity at night



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in the dark to climb up into the jolly-boat astern, and had lain there and breathed fresh air until nearly sunrise. Once or twice he had been into the caboose and got something to eat; and sometimes he had stopped by the compass, as it seemed to him their journey was never coming to an end, and he wanted to assure himself that the vessel was really steering a northerly course to Rio, as he had heard from some one in the harbour she intended to do.

He was a young, slightly-built man, with small quick eyes, about Salve's height, and apparently a Spaniard or Portuguese, but could make himself understood in English.

The captain had some doubts as to the truth of his story, as his rank appeared to be superior to that of a common soldier; and from his anxiety not to betray his presence in the ship, even after they had got out into the open sea, he concluded that he was a political refugee, who at that time would not be very safe even at Rio. He ordered food to be given him, and promised that he should make his way ashore as best he could, but that he was not to expect help from him, as the captain had no intention of involving himself with the authorities on his account.

Salve, who, like the generality of sailors, could talk a good deal of English, gradually attached himself to the Spaniard, and found him an entertaining and clever fellow.

Before a light afternoon breeze they glided at last from the sea into the narrow channel that runs up to Rio de Janeiro—one of the loveliest in the world, with majestic granite mountains on either side, one of which was already blazing in the ruddy light of the evening sun, while the other in shade stood out a deep violet against the clear blue of the sky above. On the one side, at the foot of the Sugarloaf Mountain, they had the fortress of Praja; on the other, the Castle of Santa Cruz; and facing them on the highest point in the harbour, the slender signal-tower that announces every ship as it appears at the entrance of the channel.

So beautiful was the scene that under its softening influence Salve felt almost inclined to regret his determination to desert. The feeling, however, lasted no longer than the beauty which produced it. The soft lights died away upon the hills, and with them the softer feelings which had crept in upon his heart. Night settled down upon the outer world, and with it returned the gloomy thoughts that now for many days had made his mind their home.

It had occurred to him that the Brazilian would have it in his power to assist him in effecting his purpose, when they arrived in the harbour, and he had, therefore, found opportunities of rendering him indebted to him for many small services. He lent him clothes now to appear among the other sailors when they were mustered before the authorities, who came on board immediately after the ship entered the harbour, and it

thus escaped their notice that there was one over the number returned by the captain as his crew.

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The harbour pilot, however—a consequential Mulatto in a Panama hat and red feather, and decorated with a badge and staff—was more sharp-sighted, and soon perceived, from the irritable tone in which the song at the capstan was sung again as they warped the vessel round to her anchorage in the Ilha das Cobras basin, that there was discontent prevailing on board; and it was no doubt owing to a hint from him that already the same evening there were “runners” waiting about near them on the quay.

Captain Beck was out of humour both with himself and with his crew. Down in a warm climate he was always irritable, and now that he believed his authority weakened he had become a perfect tyrant. The prospect of another voyage under his command was more than many of his crew could face, and preparations were made by many of them to leave the ship as soon as they should have received whatever portion of pay on account the captain proposed, as is customary when a vessel is in harbour, to distribute. Salve, however, did not wait for this, and already, the second night, he and the Brazilian had disappeared.

There was a sharp search instituted, with the assistance of the harbour police, especially in the house of one particular runner who had been seen talking with the crew. But he gave them such full liberty to search his house, and showed such a clear conscience in the matter, that the police had to admit that they were off the scent this time.

The captain after this intrusted the nightwatches only to those among the crew upon whom he could place reliance, hauled off from the quay every evening, and absolutely refused all leave on shore. He had only received the thanks he deserved, he remarked bitterly, for having helped that red-jacketed thief, who, by way of return, had taken from him his best man. Salve's desertion, indeed, irritated him more than he cared to admit to himself. He had, according to promise, had him taught navigation by the first mate on the voyage out; and had settled in his own mind that when he himself retired from the sea Salve should command the Juno for him. He certainly never would find another of equal capacity, and at the same time so thoroughly to be depended upon; and now all his comfortable plans were upset.

Before leaving the vessel Salve placed his silver watch, on which he had scratched with the point of his knife, “In remembrance of Salve Kristiansen,” in the waistcoat pocket of Nils, who was snoring loud and long in his hammock alongside; and then, unobserved by the watch on deck, the two friends clambered over to the quay in the silent night by means of the shore rope, and disappeared at once into the darkness of the neighbouring alleys. The Brazilian appeared to be well acquainted with the localities, and anxious at the same time; for he avoided the lighted streets, and often stopped at dark corners to reconnoitre, and see that the way was clear of the night police.



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After picking their way for an hour among narrow lanes, they came out into a suburb where the houses began to alternate with garden walls, over which hung orange-trees diffusing their heavy perfume through the quiet night. They had to cross an open place to the other suburb, Mata Poreas, and upon the rising ground to one side of them they saw a building that looked like a fortress enclosed by a stone wall, which caused Salve's comrade considerable perturbation. It was the house of correction, before which there was always a sentry on duty.

They passed it, however, unchallenged, and after half-an-hour's further walking, the Brazilian halted at last before a garden wall, in which there was a small wicket gate. He looked cautiously round him and said excitedly—

"We must climb over here, and then—we are safe."

He climbed up on Salve's back, and so on to the top of the wall; drew Salve up beside him, and then sprang down into the little garden and began to roll about on the grass as if he had taken leave of his senses, crying, "Salvado! Salvado!"

He rushed up then to the little villa that lay half overshadowed by trees, and knocking in a particular manner at the door, called out "Paolina! Paolina!"

A female in night-dress, with a young, but rather deep voice, opened the shutter from within, and put out her head.

"Federigo!"—she said, tremblingly; and there followed then a rapid interchange of questions and answers in Spanish which Salve did not understand. He gathered merely that she was surprised to see a stranger with him, and that he calmed her apprehensions with the word "amigo," followed by a short explanation.

She opened the door, and fell impulsively on Federigo's neck, kissing him on both cheeks, and sobbing. After the custom of the place, then, she offered her cheek to Salve, and was a little surprised when he seemed not to understand her meaning, and nodded merely, as he said, half in English, half in Spanish, "good evening, senorita." It seemed to remind her, however, that in her eagerness she had forgotten her mantilla, and she left them hastily.

She came back to them again in the sitting-room almost immediately with bread, wine, fruit, and lights upon a tray; and stationed herself then in a sympathetic attitude with her arm on her brother's shoulder, while he, with lively gestures, recounted his adventures. Federigo's story seemed to be reflected from her face as from a living mirror. At one point her face became pale with passion; her black eyes flashed, and she made a sudden movement with her clenched hand in the air, as if she were giving some one a stab with a dagger. She threw her head back then with a triumphant, scornful laugh that showed her dazzling white teeth; and Salve inferred that her brother must have killed

some person or other in Monte Video, probably in self-preservation, and that he was afraid the police here, in Rio, should have had information of it.



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He sat and gazed at her. She was a lithe, supple-looking woman, at once graceful and fully developed; a dark beauty of the style peculiar to the South, with wonderful animation in her face, and dark flashing eyes. At the same time the play of her features was not pleasing, Salve thought. It reminded him too much of her brother—it was not feminine; and he was further repelled by the way in which she repeatedly allowed her eyes to rest upon him. He didn't know why, but Elizabeth's deep, true northern face came so vividly before him then, that he felt he could have drawn it to the life.

The not very flattering expression which this comparison had caused his face unconsciously to assume as he looked at her, was caught, unfortunately, by Paolina, as she was on the point of tendering him her thanks in her impetuous way for what she heard he had done for her brother. She stopped short in surprise, and evidently repressed a vehemently resentful impulse, while a look unpleasant for him came into her eyes. She went over then and took him by the hand in the same way she had seen him take her own on his arrival, and spoke coldly enough a few words which were meant to convey her thanks. She didn't look at him again, not even when she presently said good-night to him, after having woken up the old mulatto woman who, with herself and her mother, were the only other inhabitants of the house, and told her to make up a couple of mat beds in the adjoining room. Federigo had before that gone in to his mother, and they could be heard in eager conversation.

In Salve's mind a new impulse had been unexpectedly given to thoughts from which the novelty of his situation should have afforded him at least a temporary relief; and he lay long awake, thinking drearily about Elizabeth. When he did fall asleep at last, he dreamed that he had come into a serpent's nest, and that he was engaged in a life and death conflict with a huge snake, that was thrusting its forked tongue at him from walls, from roof, from every side; and in the gleam of its vindictive eyes, he seemed all at once to recognise Paolina.

CHAPTER XIV.

With a view to bring himself into harmony with his surroundings, he appeared next day in his suit of fine blue cloth, which he had brought with him in his bundle, together with sundry other articles, and what money he had still remaining from the pay which he had received at Monte Video. That he looked well in his handsome sailor dress was evident enough, from the surprised look with which he was greeted by Federigo's mother, when he was presented to her. She had evidently expected to see in her son's friend something in the style of the raw Brazilian sailor, a class of men who down there were generally drawn from the lowest dregs of the populace.

She herself was a withered old woman, yellow as parchment, with a mass of thick grey hair gathered in a single knot at the back of her head. She wore heavy rings on her fingers, and large earrings; her small piercing eyes had a look of burnt-out passion; and

her countenance wore in a stronger degree the furtive, ratlike expression which her son's occasionally displayed.



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As regards her further characteristics, Salve soon perceived that she was addicted to drink. She used to remain during the greater part of the day on the shady side of the house, or on the little veranda, with acachacas and water by her side, and incessantly smoking and rolling cigarettes; and she was often quite drunk as she mumbled her Ave Maria, and told her beads on her knees before going to bed in the evening. Still the other inmates of the house appeared to have great respect for her; and it was evident that she held the threads of whatever business they might have on hand.

The *senorita* was out all the morning with the old mulatto woman, making purchases for the house, Federigo said, and informing herself as to what activity was being shown in their pursuit. When she returned, she avoided addressing herself directly to Salve; and he observed that she handed over a quantity of money to her brother, which had the happy effect of bringing into his countenance a more cheerful look than it had hitherto worn that morning.

“What have you done to my sister?” Federigo asked one day, laughing; “you are not in her good graces. She is dangerous,” he said, seriously; and added then, as if speculating on possibilities, “as long as you are in this house, at all events, you are safe. But mind, you are warned.”

Federigo soon began to weary of their enforced confinement to the house, and in spite of his sister’s efforts to dissuade him, began to go out in the evenings, coming home very late, and in a gloomy, irritable humour—evidently, from the casual remarks he let fall, having lost all his money at play.

The second morning of his stay in the house Salve had perceived that there was a want of money; and having heard the brother and sister quarrelling one day when both were in a bad humour, he thought it best to carry out, at the first convenient moment, the determination at which he had arrived, and handed over to Federigo what money he had, with the exception of a single silver piastre, saying, “That it was only right he should pay for his lodging and board.”

The money, though deprecatingly, was still accepted, and in the evening Federigo was out once more, his sister remaining at home.

She and Salve, on account of their ignorance of each other’s language, could not hold much conversation together, and Salve was rather glad of this wall of separation between them, as it left him more at his ease. She had, however, recently looked more often at him with a sort of interest, and on several occasions had put questions to him through her brother. Her range of ideas was apparently not extensive, as her questions always turned upon the same topic—namely, what the women were like in his country; so that he soon came to know by heart all the Spanish terms which related to that subject.



They were out on the veranda together that evening, and as she went past his back while he was leaning over in his seat, she drew her hand as if by accident lightly through his hair. If it had had the electricity of a cat's, it would have given out a perfect shower of sparks, so enraged was he at the advance.



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When Federigo came home he flung his hat away angrily on to a chair, and drank down at a gulp a glass of rum that was standing on the table. He no longer wore the smart cloak he had on when he went out.

“I have gambled away all your money!” he cried, in English, to Salve, as if careless of further reticence, and made some remark then with an unpleasant laugh to his sister, who had evidently by her expression perceived at once how matters stood.

“There’s my last piastre for you,” said Salve, throwing it over to him. “Try your luck with it.”

“He is successful in love,” said Paolina, tearfully, and with a *naive* affectation of superstition—“he is engaged.”

When her brother, who was balancing the piastre on his forefinger, laughingly translated what she had said, Salve replied snappishly, with an impatient glance at the *senorita*—

“I am not engaged, and never shall be.”

“Unsuccessful in love!” she broke out, gleefully; “and the last piastre! To-morrow we shall win a hundred, two hundred, Federigo!”

It was clearly the conviction of her heart; and she seized a mandolin and began to dance to her own accompaniment, her eyes resting as she did so upon Salve with a peculiar expression.

“Quick, Federigo!—why not this evening?” she cried, breaking off suddenly with a laugh, and throwing the mandolin from her on to the sofa. “To-morrow his luck may be gone.”

She seized her brother’s hat, crushed it down upon his head, and pushed him eagerly out of the door, going with him herself to open the wicket.

She came back then to Salve, and as they sat *tete-a-tete* in the lamplit room with doors and windows thrown wide open, the moonlight gleaming on the dark trees outside, and the night air perfumed with the scent of flowers, she endeavoured to ingratiate herself with him by pouring out his rum-and-water and by rolling his cigarettes, an art in which it appeared from her laughter and gestures that she thought him awkward. She was in a state of feverish excitement, and kept darting off to the wicket and back again.

Salve sat and smoked, and sipped his glass unconcernedly, whilst she rocked herself backwards and forwards in a rocking-chair, with her head thrown back, and her eyes steadily fixed upon him. He heard a sigh, and she said in a low, ingratiating tone—

“I am afraid Federigo is unlucky.”



Salve was not so stupid as not to comprehend her meaning. He was quite aware that she was handsome as she sat there with her hand on her knee, and her well-formed foot gracefully brought into view; but his feeling was exclusively one of indignation that such a common Brazilian baggage should presume to bring herself into comparison with Elizabeth. He flung away his cigar impatiently, and went down into the garden, without attempting to conceal his aversion. He hated all women since the one he had fixed his heart on had disappointed him, and he strode backwards and forwards now in more than usual indignation against the sex.



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He was still pacing the garden when Federigo came back, heated and triumphant, with his cloak on his shoulder and a bag under his arm.

“Nearly three hundred piastres!” he cried, clearing the garden in a succession of bounds.

His sister had been asleep on the sofa, and sprang up in ecstasy at the intelligence; and they proceeded then with childish glee to spread out the silver on the table, and divide it into three. When Salve absolutely refused to take more than his one piastre back again, there came actually a look of humble admiration into the senorita’s eyes. She could not comprehend such an act of self-sacrifice, although she seemed to vaguely feel that there was something noble about it. After a moment’s consideration she held out her hand and said—

“Senor, give me the piastre you have in your hand, and I will give you another in return for it.”

He did so, and she took it and kissed it repeatedly.

“I shall play with this one to-morrow evening,” she cried joyfully, and put it into her bosom.

She carried out her intention, and came home beaming, with a whole bagful of piastres.

It seemed that the family lived only by play. The son, it is true, was in connection with one or other of the political parties of the town, with the prospect of an appointment as officer in a volunteer corps if any rising took place; but that did not in the meantime bring in money, and how they managed to get along when luck went against them it was not easy to see.

Salve meanwhile was becoming rather tired of being on land. The seclusion had suited him well enough at first, until the senorita had begun to pay him attentions; but now that she evidently remained at home all day solely on his account, to dress at him, and play off all sorts of coquetry upon him, he began to find it intolerable; and when the Juno at last had sailed, he announced one day that he meant to go down to the harbour and look for employment.

The senorita turned pale, but soon recovered her self-possession, and even joked with him about it; and later on her brother persuaded him to defer his intention for three days, until he had attended a gathering of Federigo’s friends, which was to take place one night down in one of the suburbs.

That evening, when her brother had gone out as usual to play, the senorita sat down in the window of the room where Salve was, and through which he would have to pass to go into the garden. She had undone her luxuriant hair, and had put on a languishing



look, and every now and then thrummed absently on her guitar, humming gently to herself as she fixed her black eyes upon him. Salve saw himself in a manner besieged, and felt half inclined to brush past her and escape into the garden; but it would have seemed too deliberately unfriendly. The only sign which betrayed his consciousness of the situation was the somewhat hasty way in which he puffed his cigarette.



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“You really mean to leave us?” she said at last sadly, in almost a beseeching tone.

“Yes, senorita,” was the reply, and evidently it came from the bottom of his heart; he was angry, and weary of her importunity.

He had hardly said it before, thrusting her hand into her bosom, she had sprung to her feet, and a stiletto whizzed past his ear, and stuck quivering in the wall close to his head. Her supple body was still in motion, her face was pale, and her eyes were flashing: then with a sudden transition she threw herself back and laughed.

“Were you frightened?” she cried. But Salve showed no sign of it. He was provoked, but cool; and not being the kind of man who would deign to engage in a conflict with a woman, he left the stiletto sticking in the wall, though at first he had thought of seizing it.

“Look here!” she said, suddenly darting over and drawing it out, and then practising with it, laughing all the while, at various spots on the walls of the room, which she hit every time to a nicety.

“You were frightened—confess that you were,” she said, teasingly, sitting down opposite to him, heated with the exercise she had gone through. She gazed into his face with her cheek resting on her hand and her elbow on the table. “You were afraid; and now you are angry. The women in your country don’t do such things!”

Salve turned to her with a look of icy rebuff. “No, senorita,” he replied, curtly, and went down into the garden.

Thereupon she seized the guitar again, and began strumming an accompaniment apparently to her thoughts. It was no longer lively music she played, but something of a menacing strain, in keeping with the look in her eyes, and she seemed in a manner to hiss the air through her teeth.

Later on in the evening she came tripping over to him with a coquettish smile, and after the custom of the country offered him a cigarette, which she had begun to smoke herself. When he rather ungallantly declined it, she exclaimed furiously, stamping her foot—

“Senor!”

But she recovered herself in a moment, and said laughing, with at all events apparent good-nature, something which meant that she understood that this might perhaps not be a custom in his country.

Salve felt much relieved when her brother came home, and told him that the meeting he was waiting for was to take place on the following evening.



CHAPTER XV.

It was into a badly-lighted tavern, with two or three rooms leading out of one another, that his friend then conducted him. Men of the most various social positions, many with a military look, and in half-threadbare uniforms, filled the inner rooms; and in the outer one he had seen upon entering a number of seafaring men, who looked like Americans, and who nodded to him on the strength of his sailor's dress. There were several women, more or less well dressed, moving about among them, and others standing with eager faces over the gambling-table in the inner room. All were drinking acachacas, and the whole place was pervaded with a cloud of tobacco-smoke, out of which there came a deafening clamour of talk.

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Salve had a seat found for him by his friend at a long table, amongst a number of bronzed, bearded men, with large hats, leather breeches, and spurs, whose company he by no means cared about. They looked like mounted bullock-drivers, such as he had seen at Monte Video, or still more, perhaps, like brigands, or banditti.

“They belong to Mendez’s volunteer corps,” whispered Federigo, as he presented him then to the chief of the party, who sat at the top of the table—a powerful fellow, with a weather-beaten complexion, heavy black mustachios, and a pair of small active eyes, which, more than once afterwards, when Salve was not looking, were turned critically upon him.

Every now and then they clinked their glasses together to some party toast; but otherwise they were quiet enough at first. People of the same calibre sat round other tables in the immediate neighbourhood; and at another were intermingled well-dressed persons from the town, who were carrying on a whispered conversation, and who appeared anxious.

The shouting, and the noise, and the laughter kept increasing. There were already drunken faces at the table, and in several directions quarrelling and the sound of blows were beginning to be heard. Federigo, who seemed to be known to many in the rooms, had mixed with the crowd, and Salve’s neighbours on either side were now playing eagerly with dice, diving from time to time for small silver pieces into heavy leathern purses, that seemed to have been destined for sums very different from what their present meagre contents represented. So many debased, avaricious countenances as he saw around him he had never imagined that it would be possible to collect in one spot, and he made up his mind to have no more to do with them than he could possibly help. He might congratulate himself, he thought, if he escaped from them with a whole skin, and he felt in his breast-pocket to see that his knife was there.

One of the North Americans who had nodded to him, in virtue of his sailor’s dress, when he entered, came over to him now and asked him to come and sit with them; but as he rather felt himself under Federigo’s charge, he declined just then. Shortly after, to his surprise, he saw the senorita standing at the gaming-table, with her head, which was all he could see, beautifully dressed; and he observed that the eyes of the keeper of the tavern—a tall, lean Portuguese, with a long, sallow face, and hardly any hair on his head, who himself presided at the table—were turned towards her continually with a look of humble, tender concern. She was playing excitedly, and losing every time. At last she stopped, in evident irritation, and beckoned him to one side, with a certain authority, in spite of his having the table to attend to.

They spoke eagerly together, and Salve caught a rapid glance directed towards himself by the senorita, which he did not at all like. She was unnaturally pale; and he saw that she finally gave the other her hand, which he kissed with an enraptured expression, and she then disappeared from the room.



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The landlord's face beamed the whole evening afterwards, and he bowed politely to Federigo as he passed the table. The latter, the next time he came near Salve, whispered rather scornfully—

"I believe my sister has bartered away her soul this evening, and promised to marry that old money-bag there who keeps the tavern. Congratulate us, *amigo mio!*"

Salve observed that the said money-bag conferred now more than once with the man at the head of his own table, and was apparently making terms with him; and that the latter also, when he thought he was not observed, glanced over at himself in a way that was very far from putting him at his ease.

The American who had spoken to him before—a tall, athletic-looking man, with a fair beard round a hard Yankee face, and with a remnant of gold lace on the sleeve of his jacket—had since been at the gaming-table, and had been losing one doubloon after another.

"They don't play fair, my lad!" he cried in English to Salve, to whom he seemed anxious to make up.

"I daresay not," was the reply; "it's a vile den."

"What country do you hail from?"

"Norway."

"Ah! Norwegian. Good sailors."

"Deserted at Rio?" he asked then, with a laugh, as if he expected, as a matter of course, an answer in the affirmative.

"Shall I play for you?" he asked presently.

"No money."

"Here's a guinea on account of your wages on board the 'Stars and Stripes,' for Valparaiso and Chinchas!" he cried, with a laugh that was heard above the surrounding din; and flinging a gold piece on the table, he lost it.

He turned, and putting his hand to his mouth, shouted—

"One more on account!" and another gold piece shared the fate of the first.

"One more on account!" there came again, and with the same result.



Salve had by this time had about enough of this free-and-easy and undesired playing on his account. The man's face, moreover, with all its joviality, by no means attracted him, and he shouted to him in a sharply-protesting tone—

“Play for yourself, Yankee.”

The American seemed not to be able to hear on that side, for he repeated, coolly nodding to him—

“One more on account!”

Salve's patience was exhausted. He had been sitting all this time squeezed up in the narrow space between the bench and the wall with people on both sides of him, preventing his getting out; but now grasping his neighbour violently by the shoulder, he sprang all at once across the table and over to the unabashed Yankee, with an irresistible feeling that, come what might, he would get out into the freedom of the open air once more.

Just then there came from the furthest room a cry of “police.” The lights in that room were at once extinguished; and a moment after, those in the room where Salve was on the point of falling foul of the American (who, to his great surprise, found him all of a sudden confronting him) went out also.

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Their hostile relations, however, were almost immediately turned into friendly ones. For Salve, who had seen the landlord making a rush towards him, felt himself suddenly, in the midst of the confusion caused by the darkness, seized by two men and forced towards a door leading in another direction than that in which he saw the stream was setting, and which no doubt was the way out.

“Help, Yankee! there’s some villany on here; the small door to the right!” he shouted, with great presence of mind, and at the same moment the door was slammed behind him. A handkerchief was tied over his mouth; he was tripped up and brought heavily to the ground, where his feet and hands were tied, and he was then shot into a dark side-room, which seemed to be at the back of a press, that was unlatched to pass him through.

“H’m!” said the Yankee coolly, to himself. “I am not going to lose his pay, if I know it,” and he set out accordingly in search of the police, with whom he had no outstanding account.

Salve was certain he had heard the senorita’s voice whispering in the outer room; and not long after he heard the latch in the press raised, and she stood before him with a light. She looked at him mischievously, and spilt some oil out of the lamp on to his face with a little scornful laugh. But her expression changed then to that of a tigress burning for revenge that is compelled to put off the gratification of her fury, and she darted out again, clapping down the latch behind her.

Salve lay tightly bound with his hands behind his back. But his cat-like suppleness enabled him eventually to wriggle his sheath-knife out of his breast pocket, and he found no great difficulty then in freeing himself from his bonds.

He stood now with his knife in his hand and listened.

Before long he heard the American’s voice, with the police, and they appeared to be searching. He shouted to them; and the next moment he was released.

“He is one of our crew—belongs to the Stars and Stripes,” said the American, arresting Salve, who, as long as he got out of this accursed town now, did not care in what capacity it might be, and offered no opposition.

“You have not improved your beauty, my lad,” said his rescuer, derisively, as he held up the light to his face.

“I should like to have one word with the tavern-keeper before I go,” said Salve.

“And that is what we have not the slightest inclination for,” said the American—who, it now appeared, was boatswain on board—in a dry tone of authority. “We are not going



larking with the police. Besides, having once recovered that trifle of wages, I don't mean to risk losing it again."

The Yankees made a close ring round their prisoner, and there was nothing for it but to follow as he was directed. A look, however, at the boatswain gave him to understand that that question of the wages would be settled between them when they got on board.



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CHAPTER XVI.

The Stars and Stripes lay in the roads with the Union flag at her gaff. She was a long, black, and, at the water-line, well-shaped vessel, with a crew of thirty-two men; and Salve was so taken with her appearance that as they came alongside he silently congratulated himself on his luck in getting a berth in her. They were so obliging, moreover, as to give him a berth to himself in a separate cabin below. But, to his intense indignation, no sooner had he entered it than the door was latched on the outside, and when he tried to kick it open, it was signified to him that during the short time they had still to be at Rio, he was to remain in confinement, that they might be sure of him. The heat was intolerable down there; and to add to that, there was incessant crying and groaning going on in the hold beside him, as if it were full of sick people. It was the vilest treatment he had ever been subjected to.

The work of taking in the cargo went on uninterruptedly the whole night, as if they were in a particular hurry to get out of the harbour, and about noon the anchor was weighed while the contents of the last lighter were being taken on board.

When Salve, some hours after, was set at liberty, they were already out in the open sea off the mouth of the channel. The captain, the three mates, and several of the inferiors in command, when on deck, wore gold-laced caps and a kind of uniform, as on a man-of-war, and the officer of the watch was armed. The crew, on the other hand, were almost to a man shabby, and they seemed to consist of men of every nationality—English, Irish, Germans, and Americans, not to mention half a dozen negroes and mulattoes. As no one took any notice of him, he went about as he pleased for a while; and presently saw, with a disagreeable sensation, no less than three corpses carelessly sewed up in sail-cloth dropped over the side of the ship that was turned from the land, without the slightest ceremony. The uncomfortable feeling which this incident had aroused was anything but allayed when he heard presently from a little pale cabin-boy with whom he had entered into conversation that it had been successfully concealed from the harbour authorities that there was yellow fever on board; that there were many more lying sick below; and that one of those who had just been heaved overboard, had died the day before in the very berth in which Salve had slept that night.

In the evening he was called aft to the captain, who was standing with the boatswain at his elbow. He was a spare, energetic-looking man, of about forty years of age, with thick black whiskers, marked features, and rather hollow cheeks, and with carefully dressed, glossy hair. He was smoking a handsome pipe with a long stem inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and took a sip from time to time from a cup of black coffee that was standing on the skylight.

“What is your name?” he asked, nodding in reply to Salve’s salute.



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“Salve.”

“Salve,” repeated the captain, with an English pronunciation of the name; “and Norwegian?”

“He looks too respectable for the pack he’ll have to herd with,” he muttered to the boatswain.

“Able seaman?”

“Yes.”

“You have had three guineas on account?” he went on, after a couple of puffs to keep his pipe alight, as he looked into his ledger; “a month’s wages.”

“No, sir,” said Salve, firmly, “I have had nothing on account,”—and he proceeded then to relate the circumstances under which the supposed payment had been made. “I have not been regularly engaged till this moment, if I am so now; but up to this I have been treated like a dog, and worse.”

The captain took no notice of his last observation, and merely said shortly and sternly

“The three guineas are owing to him, boatswain Jenkins. His place will be in the foretop. A steady hand will be wanted among all that rabble there.”

“Another time you’ll perhaps play on your own account, and not on the sailors’,” he observed, turning to the boatswain; but Salve caught the remark.

With this the conference came to an end, the boatswain’s expression prophesying that when the opportunity offered Salve should pay for his triumph. He went about nursing his prominent chin, and twisting his yellow whiskers, and found a victim for the present in a wretched Mulatto, who was scouring for the cook. After first correcting him sharply for nothing, he coolly felled him to the deck with a handspike, and left him lying there unable to move.

Salve’s blood boiled at the sight; but his indignation gave way presently to astonishment when he saw the poor fellow get up and go on indefatigably with his work, after first quietly wiping his own blood off the saucepan. There was a limit to brutality, he thought, and in his disgust he almost envied him the blow he had received.

He provided himself now from the purser with a suit of seaman’s clothes in lieu of the rather damaged cloth ones which he wore; and the sailmaker gave him out hammock clothes, to be paid for out of his wages. He proceeded then to hang his hammock from one of the beams between decks; and while he was doing so observed another man in



a canvas suit like his own, similarly occupied, not far from him. He couldn't be mistaken—it was Federigo.

The latter had, as Salve afterwards heard, been taken by the police during the affair in the tavern. He had seen how Salve had been rescued by the boatswain of the *Stars and Stripes*; and having managed to escape from his captors on the way to the guard-house, he had sought a similar refuge.

Salve's indignation at his sister's baseness was still too fresh for Federigo's reappearance to be in any way agreeable to him, although he believed him to be innocent of any complicity in that business. At the same time, the latter's conscience was apparently not entirely clear in the matter, for there was a certain conscious sense of humiliation in his expression, combined with something which made Salve feel that he must be upon his guard. Neither spoke to the other, and it might have been supposed from their bearing towards one another that they had never met before.



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It very soon became clear to Salve that he could not have hit upon a more unfortunate ship. The crew was composed of the dregs of the New Orleans and Charleston docks—men with every species of vice and degradation stamped upon their countenances, and amongst whom every second word was some infamous oath or blasphemy. Blows with handspikes were of common occurrence, and brutality and violence generally were the order of the day. There was no court of appeal, and the immunity which any one individual might enjoy depended entirely upon how far he was protected by the officers—who, however, in a general way, did not interfere in the quarrels forward—or had formed a league with others.

The Americans and the Irish banded together, and being the most numerous, practised a shameless system of tyranny against any who could not defend themselves—a miserable sickly Spaniard, who had been forced to work until he had actually dropped, having recently been more especially the object of their attentions. Their supremacy, however, was contested by a party of seven or eight tattered countrymen of the latter, with one or two Portuguese, who were always ready with their knives, and who formed a sort of opposition. To this party Federigo had attached himself.

Salve stood alone. The Americans and Irish had at first reckoned upon having him with them, but had gradually turned against him. They had taken offence at his apparent disinclination to associate with them more than he could help. He seemed to think himself too good for them; and in addition to that, the seaman-like qualities which he displayed made them dislike him out of envy. But their hostility was perhaps mainly due to the boatswain, who encouraged the idea among the rest of the crew that he was favoured by the officers. Federigo came out now in an unexpectedly friendly light; and Salve perceived that it was only owing to him that all the Portuguese were not against him also. The result was that the two gradually approached such other again.

There were of course in such a collection of riff-raff, individual bullies whose hands were against every man, but who to some extent kept each other in check. The one most feared of these was a huge, copper-coloured, scarred Irishman, who seemed periodically to be possessed by a very demon of violence, and to be actually running over with bad blood. He had been in irons for some time before the vessel arrived at Rio, for having one day sworn on deck that he would murder the captain. It was with this ruffian that Salve had first to measure himself, the boatswain being the immediate cause.



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One day when the large bell forward had rung for dinner, the boatswain gave an order which detained Salve for some time after the others had taken their places at the long table in the round-house, and when he came in everything was eaten up, and he lost his dinner. The following day exactly the same thing happened, and he had to content himself with his breakfast and supper rations for the day. He perfectly understood the meaning of it. In smartness and activity he was so far beyond comparison superior to any of the other foretop hands, that the boatswain had not been able to find any excuse for subjecting him to punishment: he was going to try and hit him in another way. On his lonely watch that night Salve decided what he should do if the trick was practised a third time upon him. It would be better to bring things to a crisis at once than have his strength gradually exhausted by continued insufficiency of food.

The same order being given at the same time next day, he carried it out as speedily as he could, and hurried on then to the round-house, where the others were already at their dinner, with a bowl of meat and soup to every two men.

He sat down by the side of the Irishman, who he saw had a bowl to himself.

“Put the bowl this way,” he said, coolly.

The Irishman merely looked at him contemptuously. He was evidently astonished at his audacity, but went on eating composedly.

Salve felt that he must not be beaten.

“Life for life, Irishman,” he cried, springing to his feet, and as the other also rose, giving him a blow in the face that sent him backwards on the bench against the wall.

A fierce conflict now ensued. The Irishman got up like a bleeding ox, and catching up a marline-spike that was hanging from the beam, gave Salve a deep wound in the cheek, the scar of which he carried his whole life through. They drew their knives then; and Salve’s coolness and activity soon gave him the superiority over his furious and unwieldy opponent. His movements were like those of a steel spring; and pale and smiling, he delivered every blow with such well-calculated effect, that the affair ended with the Irishman, bleeding profusely and half-unconscious, tumbling out of the narrow doorway to save himself.

There were not a few who were glad enough that the dreaded Irishman should have been worsted, and it was to this feeling Salve was indebted for being allowed to fight it out alone with him. He stuck his knife now into the table by the side of his dish, and, looking round him, asked, “Is there any one else now who would like to keep me out of my meat?”

There was no answer.



“While I am about it,” he continued, without noticing the blood that was running down his face and over his hands, “I’ll settle this matter once for all. I have two days’ rations owing to me. Very well. For the next two days I shall keep one dish to myself. I shall see then what the Irishman or any one else thinks of it.”



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The Irishman was confined to his hammock the whole week with wound-fever, and Salve had for the first time won the respect of the crew. He felt at the same time that he had commenced a desperate struggle, and that if he was to enjoy any sort of security in this company of ruffians whom he had now set at defiance, he must take the game into his own hands, and make himself at least as much feared as the Irishman had been. Accordingly, instead of waiting to be challenged, he deliberately became the aggressor, and set himself to dispense justice as he pleased.

The one who, next to the Irishman, was most dreaded, was a broad-shouldered mulatto, who carried on a petty system of pillage against any one that was not supported, unluckily for him, by any party; and Salve himself had been obliged one evening to put up with having his hammock taken down, and the mulatto's hung in its place. He had seen him in several fights, and had observed his peculiar tactics; the result of his observations being the conviction that the man had not the strength which he was anxious to make the others think he had. In pursuance of this policy, he had picked a quarrel with him on the head of that matter of the hammock, and with a similarly decisive result. The mulatto rejoiced in the name of Januarius, and Salve accordingly requested him to remember that there was something still owing to him for the eleven other months of the year. He was a cur by nature, and never seemed to have the slightest desire to renew the struggle afterwards, which was not the case with the Irishman, with whom Salve perceived, directly the man came on deck again, that a fresh trial of strength was inevitable.

An opportunity was not long in offering, and Salve seized it at once, so that the challenge might come from him. The Irishman had taken a fancy to the boots of the wretched Spaniard who was ill, and was now wearing them.

"Irishman," said Salve, as the other passed him, when they were lounging about after dinner, "that is an awkward pair of boots you have on there. If you take my advice you'll return them to their owner, or—I shall have to pull them off you."

The Irishman glared at him, but turned pale at the last threat; and Salve's eye seemed to light up at the prospect of carrying it out. The former made the mistake of preparing to defend himself instead of taking the aggressive, and in a moment was knocked down and stunned for an instant by a couple of unexpected blows from Salve, who flew at him like a tiger-cat. The crew gathered round. The Irishman seized a heavy iron pump-handle as a weapon, and Salve a handspike; and Salve kept his word. He pulled the boots off as the other lay senseless on the deck, and took them down to the Spaniard.

In point of physical strength, Salve was far from being the equal of many of these men, who, he knew very well, were now only looking out for an occasion to get the better of him. His only chance was to take the initiative on all occasions, and to seem the most reckless and the most careless of life, and the most eager to fight of them all. He

therefore flew at his man without hesitation on the slightest provocation, and whenever he threatened took care to keep his word.

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The constant strain upon his energy became at last like a fever in his blood, and the life he was leading began to show itself in his face. He had come to be reckoned on board as one of those stubborn, unruly spirits that are common enough among the dregs of humanity to be met with in ships' holds in that quarter of the globe, and who usually end their career at the yard-arm, or by a bullet from the captain's revolver. In this very ship, before they came into Rio, at the time the Irishman had been put in irons, the captain had, without any hesitation, shot down from the yard one of the crew, whom he supposed to be the ringleader of the mutineers. He looked upon Salve now with increasing distrust, wondering how he could ever have been so mistaken in a man as he had been in him. "But put a man to herd with rabble, and it's hard for him not to become one of them," he said; and, deteriorated though he was, Salve was still the smartest sailor he had on board.

The boatswain kept out of his way now as much as possible, for he had heard that Salve had sworn to tear his entrails out if he gave him any fresh cause for offence. The latter knew very well, though, that he was meditating something against him, and was not surprised therefore at being called aft one day to stand a formal trial before the captain for the expression which he had used with regard to the boatswain, and which he did not affect to deny, "as the boatswain," he said, "had wished to take his life."

"I mean to leave the ship," he said, "the moment we come to Valparaiso. I am only engaged so far. But, indeed, I care little what becomes of me," he ended, gloomily.

The captain probably had his own notions with regard to the boatswain, as Salve escaped the severe punishment he had expected, and was only condemned to solitary confinement for fourteen days on bread-and-water.

"That will take you down a bit, my lad," said the captain.

The boatswain, however, made up for the leniency of his superior by a little ingenuity of his own; and every day, when Salve was enjoying his meagre fare in his place of confinement, the mulatto, whom he had triumphed over, by the boatswain's orders, took his dinner of hot meat and ate it outside the door, close to the hole through which the light was admitted, that the savoury smell might make its way in and tantalise him.

At first, Salve rather enjoyed the repose which his confinement afforded him; but as his hunger increased he grew irritable, and at dinner-time one day he approached his face to the opening.

"Mulatto!" he began; and the other looked up and grinned with his white teeth, pleased to see some sign at last that his attentions had not been thrown away—"that's good food you have there."

"Excellent," replied the other, mischievously, and with an inward chuckle.

“It makes me picture to myself your future,” Salve continued, placidly, “how it will be with you when I come out again. You will be like that lobscouse, my friend. Had that never occurred to you?”



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The mulatto went on eating, but grew absent. His nature, as before observed, was not a courageous one, and it was obvious that his food at last began to stick in his throat.

“It is much the same as if you were sitting there and feeding on yourself,” said Salve, after a longer pause, during which he had watched the other’s lengthening countenance. “That’s just what it will be, my dear friend, unless—”

“Unless—?” repeated the mulatto, pricking up his ears.

“Unless you take good care to pass your dinner in here to me every day from this time. There are only five days more, and I have fasted for nine, while you have been feeding away, so you are getting off cheaply enough. If the boatswain sees you passing in food to me, you’ll be punished, so you will have to be cautious, and hold up the plate yourself before the opening, that he may think you are eating right in my face.”

These were humiliating terms; and the mulatto made no immediate reply. He merely sat with his woolly head bent down in a thoughtful attitude. But the next day he stationed his broad person with the plate in his hand up in front of the opening, and Salve mercilessly took every morsel there was on it.

It was a matter of the last importance to him not to be reduced in strength, as he knew his life was in his own hands; and that he was anything but taken down, and was as ready as ever for a fight, he showed, when he came out, in a sanguinary encounter which he engaged in gratuitously for Federigo with one of the Americans, and in which it would otherwise undoubtedly have gone hard with the Brazilian.

It was not out of any respect for him that Salve took his part. He looked upon him as false, treacherous, and entirely unprincipled; there was nothing he did or said that did not seem pervaded with these characteristics. But he helped him on the strength of that comradeship which among these reprobates has its inviolable laws; and further than that, there was something akin to a personal friendship existing between them. Federigo was decidedly interesting. He could talk more or less on almost every subject, and he was full of theories which he propounded during their watches together, and to which Salve eagerly listened. There was, he said, among other remarks, and in a superior manner, no such thing as religion, no such being as God. Such ideas were only for dunderheads, who, moreover, in every country had their own particular form of belief for the clever people and the priests to turn to their own purposes. In reference to that, he told many stories of the impositions practised by the priests in Brazil; and had many agreeable anecdotes, too, about the beliefs of the wretched little race whose Sun land they were passing at the time. He pronounced, in a word, for the right of the strongest, and for piastres, women, and freedom as the great objects of existence. What other god than Salve, he once asked ironically, had prevented the Irishman



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from taking the life of the miserable Spaniard down there in the hold? or what god other than Fear prevented the boatswain from felling Salve himself to the deck with a handspike? Although Salve despised the speaker, his arguments made no slight impression upon him. What god, he asked himself, would save him, if he did not take care of himself among all these ruffians who surrounded him? and had there been any such controlling Power in the world, he thought with bitterness, a great deal in his life would have been very different. Conversations of this kind always made him feel thoroughly bad.

“What do you suppose,” he suddenly asked, one evening as they were talking together on their watch, “your sister meant to do with me, Federigo, if I had not escaped?”

Up to this they had avoided touching upon this tender subject, and Federigo answered, evasively—

“I’m sure I don’t know. She takes wild notions sometimes.”

“Yes—but what do you think? I know you had no hand in the matter.”

“H’m! I had rather not say,” replied Federigo, obviously relieved, but with a peculiar smile, as if his fancy was ranging not without enjoyment through the region of possibilities. “She scalded a monkey once, that had bitten her, slowly to death with boiling-water. But her ingenuity was endless.”

Salve felt a shudder run through him, and something in his face told the other that he had better not indulge his fancy any further; and he hastened, therefore, to add half in joke and half by way of consolation—

“Poor Antonio Varez will pay for her having been obliged to marry him, never fear. Yes, she is rich and happy,” he concluded with a sigh, as if he envied her; and the subject dropped.

CHAPTER XVII.

They doubled Cape Horn, and came to Valparaiso. But, on the morning they were to enter the harbour, Salve, to his intense exasperation, was put under arrest. The captain found him too useful in keeping the crew in order forward, and therefore took the most effectual means of preventing him from putting into execution his declared determination to leave the ship on their arrival at that port.

After leaving Valparaiso they called at the Chincha Islands, took in a cargo of guano for China, and shaped their course then eastward across the calm southern ocean, whose



lonely monotony was only broken by the occasional appearance of one of the larger kind of sea-birds, or by the distant spouting of a whale. On board, however, the same peace was far from prevailing. That little nut-shell that crept like a dot across the limitless expanse of waters was a little floating hell, where every evil passion raged from morning until night; and it was only by secretly fomenting discord and divisions among the crew that the officers could sleep with any sense of security in their berths. As it was, a large section of them, with the Irishman

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at their head, had a project on hand for murdering their officers, and converting the ship into a whaling vessel. And even Salve, in moments of bitterness and indignation at the tyranny to which he was subjected by these men, whose lives were at the mercy of the crew, would sometimes entertain the thought of joining with the mutineers, who were restrained from carrying out their designs mainly by the fear which he had inspired, and by the refusal of his sanction. Many a desperate struggle with himself he went through when one of his tyrants passed him on deck in the dark, and the temptation to stick a knife into his back would rise strong within him, and almost master him. The other's life hung upon a hair, and Salve knew it; but that hair was stronger than he thought. Elizabeth's face, and the still unexhausted might of early impressions, made him always shrink from the thought of having a murder on his conscience, and to that depth he never fell, deteriorated though his character gradually became, from daily association with everything that was vile, to that degree that he lost all power of believing in the existence of good amongst his fellow-creatures, or in a higher Power.

We need follow no further this dark period of his life. After a year and a half on board the Stars and Stripes, and many a wild scene of turbulence and riot, he brought his connection with her to a close at last at New Orleans, where the accumulation of his wages was handed over to him.

The life on board the other vessels in which he afterwards served did not differ greatly from that which he had left; but he had become accustomed to it, and his sensibilities were blunted by long habit. It was not until some four years had thus passed that he again began to feel a longing for Europe—he would not acknowledge to himself that it was Norway exactly that he wanted to see again;—and after looking out then for some time for a suitable ship for the home voyage, he found himself at last with his Brazilian friend on board a large barque that was homeward bound from Curacoa, with tobacco and rum, for Rotterdam and Nieuwediep.

Federigo had been his inseparable companion through all the vicissitudes of his southern life; the secret of his faithful attachment, as Salve suspected, being that the latter had saved money, which he had turned into gold pieces and kept in a belt round his waist. He had never, like Federigo, sought occasions to squander his pay on land in gambling or in other diversions. He hated women; and in the taverns which were frequented by sailors he was looked upon as a dangerous customer, to whom it was prudent to give as wide a berth as possible. Federigo, he fancied, looked upon him as his reserve cash-box; and when on one occasion, after they came into port, the Brazilian proposed that they should desert and put their money into some mines that were very favourably reported of just then, and share the profits, Salve remarked with perfect composure

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that he thought it highly probable that if they started upon any expedition of the kind, his friend, if he got him alone some fine night in a lonely place, would quietly stick his knife into him and make off with the whole. He therefore declined the proposition, but their relations nevertheless continued as friendly as before. Money was the only power, Salve reflected with bitterness, and this satisfaction at least he could now enjoy in life.

It had become so obvious to him that Federigo's attachment was more to his money than to himself, that he determined to get rid of his irksome attentions. Accordingly, when they arrived at Nieuwediep, he made all his arrangements for leaving the vessel, legally this time, without saying a word to him of his intention; and Federigo only heard of it at the last moment when he met him coming up with his hammock clothes. He turned pale, and tears came into his eyes,—whether from a feeling of injured friendship, or from disappointment, Salve could not quite make out. The expression of his face, with his restless small black eyes, resembled that of a disturbed rat. At last he fell on Salve's neck in his impetuous way, and broke out—

“But at any rate we must have one parting glass together this evening. I don't know how I shall ever do without you—it is so long now since we two have chummed together.”

Against his better reason Salve allowed himself to feel a little softened at the thought; and the remembrance of all the attachment this scoundrel had shown for him aroused something that almost resembled emotion.

“It is no use, my friend,” he replied; “what is done can't be undone. But I'll give you this evening, at all events. You'll find me waiting for you in the Aurora.”

As usual at this season of the year, there were a great many vessels in the harbour, and the Aurora tavern was full that evening of seafaring folk laughing and talking and singing, and renewing, or laying the foundations of, acquaintanceships over brandy or gin; while in the little room over the bar, dance music was going on uninterruptedly, and the boards were creaking under alternate Dutch schottische and English hornpipe.

To properly appreciate a genuine sailors' reel or hornpipe, one should see it danced by men who for a whole year at a time have been battling with the waves and storms in every corner of the world, and who during all that time have hardly set eyes upon a female form. They come on shore bursting with a full masculine longing for the society of the other sex, with a year's stored-up feeling to let out; and there is a positive intoxication to them in the mere dance—in the mere holding at Nieuwediep Anniken or Bibecke, or at Portsmouth Mary Ann, by the waist; and Mary Ann and Bibecke perfectly understand this, and for the moment feel themselves persons of no small importance. There is no element of coarseness in the feeling. The sailor is more given to sentiment



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proper than perhaps any other class of men, and generally speaking a more romantic feeling for woman is cherished on board ship than anywhere else in the world. If we wish to find in these times quietly romantic enthusiasm, we must be the companion of the sailor on his lonely watch, or listen to him as he lies on the fore-castle and talks with *naïve* simplicity about his wife or his sweetheart—how their attachment came about, and what he means to buy for her when he gets into port. Love on board ship is a more naturally rich and varying theme than it is in the peasant's monotonous life; and being in love, by reason of separation from the object of his love, is a different thing to the sailor, a something more entirely of the heart and the imagination, which does not lose its ideal hue in the wear and tear of everyday use. A married sailor is always an object of quiet respect to his comrades who have not had means to take the same step themselves; and without exaggeration it may be said that woman is present in her truest sense in the midst of the often outwardly rough life on board ship—warm, loving, and venerated, and surrounded by all the enchantment which distance can supply. If we are tempted to think otherwise, we have not penetrated to the simple, childlike nature which underlies the sailor's rough exterior.

The exteriors, indeed, in the dancing-room of the *Aurora* that evening were rough enough. Through the cloud of steam and tobacco-smoke, men of the most various physiognomies were to be seen, the majority tanned and bearded, with their hats on the back of their heads, and short clay pipes in their mouths, and all in the wildest state of enjoyment, dripping with perspiration and dancing indefatigably. There were French and Swedish sailors in their red woollen shirts, Norwegians and Danes in blue, with white canvas trousers, Yankees and English all in blue; and as they swung the gracefully dressed Dutch girls with their small white caps and little capes, and petticoats fastened up to do justice to the neat shoes and white stockings below, vying with each other who should dance the best and longest, the foundation of many a friendship or enmity was laid, to be prosecuted later on in the evening over a bottle of brandy or in a stand-up fight.

Salve and Federigo were sitting over their gin in a side-room which opened into the dancing-room, and was filled with men talking and drinking, or with couples who came in to rest for a moment. Neither took part in the dancing. Salve was gloomy and out of tune for pleasure, although, for Federigo's sake, he made his humour as little apparent as possible. Federigo looked very disconsolate, and during the early part of the evening sat and sipped his glass abstractedly. But as the time wore on he kept filling Salve's glass unconsciously as it were, and getting apparently more and more drunk himself, until he several times spilt the contents of his own glass on the floor. He became very talkative, recalling incident after incident of their life together. "I shall never forget you," he cried, with open-hearted impulsiveness, "never!" And as he repeated the word, there was a gleam of suppressed feeling of some kind or other in his eye.



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Salve's attention was preoccupied at the moment. He had heard two voices speaking Norwegian by the window at his back, and it made his heart knock against his ribs—it was so long since he had heard his mother-tongue. They were two men belonging to timber ships, and one of them, very red and excited, was singing the praises of one of the girls in the other room.

“Ah!” broke in the other, a Tonsberger, “you should have seen handsome Elizabeth in ‘The Star’ at Amsterdam. But she wasn’t for such as you to dance with, my lad.”

Salve's interest was awakened at once. He listened with strained attention for what might come next.

“And why not?” asked the other, a little on his dignity.

“Well, in the first place, they don’t dance there; and in the next, you would want to be a skipper at least to pay court in that quarter, mind you. I saw her in the spring of last year, when we were lying there with the Galatea; she was talking to the captain, for she’s Norwegian—and a proud one she is, too; with hair like a crown of gold on her head, and so straight rigged that it makes a man nervous to come alongside her.”

Salve sat rapt in thought, and more absent than was polite to his friend for the rest of the evening. An idea that it might be Elizabeth had shot through him, and he could not divest himself of it, although the more he reflected the more certain he knew he ought to be that she had been married long ago to young Beck. His mind was in a ferment, and a wild longing now possessed him to get home to Arendal and find out for certain how matters actually stood.

When the time came for breaking up, Federigo was drunk, and Salve was obliged to accompany his inconsolable friend in the darkness over the long narrow dam down by the dock, where there was water on both sides, Federigo clinging to his arm the whole way, and leaning heavily upon it.

When they had reached the middle of the dam, Salve saw him make a sudden movement, and almost at the same moment he received a thrust in the region of the heart, of such force that he staggered two or three steps backwards. At the same time he heard Federigo say, in a voice trembling with vindictive passion—

“Take that for Paolina, you hound!”

The object of his cupidity, the belt of money, had saved Salve, who now felled him to the ground with a blow that sent him rolling over the embankment into the sea.

“Help! help!” came up to him from the water.



“You shall have it,” replied Salve, derisively, “for our fine friendship’s sake. Throw up your knife, though, first;” and he made a noose in his handkerchief then to reach down to him. “You and your owl of a sister,” he muttered as he did so, “have taught me a thing or two. I should only have had exactly what I deserved if I had been both stuck and plundered, after being fool enough to put faith for one moment in you or any one else.”



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“Now, up with you!”

When he saw Federigo’s form scrambling up over the edge, he said, scornfully, “Now then, at last we part. Good-bye, my old and faithful friend!”

With that he went his way, and heard the Brazilian screaming and stamping with rage down on the dam behind him in the dark.

CHAPTER XVIII.

An opportunity offered almost immediately for taking a passage home with the Tonsberger before alluded to, and Salve gladly availed himself of it, calculating upon being taken off by one of the pilot boats off the coast of Arendal.

It was with a strange deep feeling that he once more trod the deck of a home vessel, and as he went about and listened to the people’s talk, felt himself an object for their curiosity. The southern brown of his face, the foreign cut of his clothes, and his whole exterior, marked him as coming from a much higher condition of sailor life than any with which they were acquainted, and he passed for an Englishman or an American; for he purposely avoided being recognised by them as a countryman, and had made his agreement with the skipper in English.

It was certainly a long time since he had been on board a craft so miserably found in every way as this leaky old galliot was. She had been bought by auction for a small sum at Faerder; and in shape resembled an old wooden shoe, in which her skipper venturesomely trudged across to Holland through the spring and winter storms, calculating that he and his crew could always lash themselves to something to avoid being washed overboard; that their timber cargo would keep them afloat; and that as long as the rigging held they could sail. He carried no top-gallant-mast, so as not to strain her; her sails were all in holes, as if they had been riddled with bullets; and where ropes had broken in the rigging, they had been tied in clumsy knots, instead of being spliced in proper sailor-like fashion. There was not much to boast of in the way of navigation either; the captain keeping his log by the simple method of spitting over the side, or throwing a chip of wood overboard, and making his calculations according to the pace it drifted past. The food, too, was on a par with all the rest, and the cook could be heard beating the dried fish with the back of an axe to make it tender. Salve seemed to have dropped all at once into home life and ways again.

The crew were dressed in thick winter clothing, and had the appearance of navvies rather than of sailors, but they were all fearless, hardy-looking fellows, as most of the men who risk their lives on these timber vessels are; and what immediately struck him with a feeling of pleasure, was the honest expression which every countenance, without exception, wore. It was long since he had seen a sight of the kind, and he felt ashamed



of himself for going about with his knife ready to hand, as had been his custom for so many years, and put it away in his chest the very first day. He took a pleasure in leaving his watch and money out on the top where they might easily have been taken, and was filled with surprise and admiration when he found that they were not stirred.



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He had not been able to get out of his head the idea that Elizabeth was now in Amsterdam, in spite of the almost certain feeling which he had that she had been long ago married to young Beck. His thoughts kept returning to, and dwelling upon, this subject, and he began to sound the skipper as to whether the trade with Holland was a paying one, and to post himself up generally in all particulars. Their conversation was carried on in a kind of jumble of English chiefly, and he gathered, at all events, that it was a lucrative business, and an occupation which seemed likely to suit him in every way. It was adventurous, and that was a recommendation; and a way of living at home in which he would be under nobody's orders but his own, fell in exactly with his nature. He had more than money enough to purchase some old craft or other, and—in fact, it was decided; he would be the owner of a timber ship, and ply to Holland.

He began now to look out more impatiently than ever for land, and longed so to catch the first streak of the Norwegian coast above the horizon, as if it was something he hardly dared hope that he should live to see. He paced up and down for hours together, anathematising through his teeth the old tub with her slack sails and rolling motion—they seemed to be drifting, not sailing; and from the restlessness and impatience he exhibited, it began to be whispered among the crew that the Englishman must have a screw loose somewhere. When the dim outline of Lindesnaes became discernible at last in the far distance, there was not a palm-clad promontory in all the southern seas that could compare with it, he thought; and the pleasure he experienced was only dashed by the apprehension of what he might have to learn about Elizabeth on landing.

They were hailed shortly after by a pilot boat from Arendal, and he arrived there after dark the same evening, and went to Madam Gjers's unpretending lodging-house until the morning.

The following day was Sunday. And as he listened to the bells ringing, and watched the townspeople, great and small, going decorously up the street in their best clothes to church—most of them he recognised, and among them Elizabeth's old aunt going up by herself, with her psalm-book and her white folded handkerchief in her hand—an indescribable feeling came over him, and his eyes filled so that he could hardly see. Here passing before him were all the gentleness and the purity that he had once believed in, when his young faith had as yet received no shock, and when he was as joyous and credulous as the rest; and he could not resist the temptation of joining the stream, trusting to the alteration in his appearance to save him from recognition.



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Beside him, almost, there walked a respectable family—he knew well who they were—with a couple of handsome daughters, in light dresses, who had grown up since he last saw them, and a younger brother whom he did not remember. The foreign, black-bearded sailor, with his fine cloth clothes, and his patent gold watch-chain, seemed to excite their curiosity; while he on his side was thinking how they would fly from him, as if a wolf had suddenly appeared in their midst, if they had any conception of the life that he had been leading for years, half-a-day of which would have filled them with more horror than they had ever imagined. They would not understand it if it was described to them, and the description would be too foul for their ears. As he quietly followed the stream up the hill, it seemed as if all the sunny houses in his beautiful native town were crying out against him, and asking whether it was possible that a man from the Stars and Stripes could be permitted to go to church as well as other people; and on entering the building he had to summon up all his self-command—he had a feeling that he was violating the sanctity of the place.

He took his seat in the last pew close to the door, and watched the people passing up the aisle. It was like a dream; they all seemed creatures of a purer world than his. The organ commenced to play, the singing was begun, and he leaned his head forward on his hands, completely overcome, and trying to conceal his sobs. In this position he remained during the greater part of the service, his past life coming up, scene by scene, before him. What a gulf he felt there was between the present condition of his mind and what it had been in the days when as a boy or lad he had gone to church like the rest. He had been familiar with more murder and blasphemy than the whole congregation together could conceive; and the simple faith he had once possessed he had been robbed of, he feared irrecoverably. His eyes flashed then with a sudden wildness as he thought who it was that had brought him to this; and it was with a deep hatred in his heart to one of the two at least, that he left the church. In a couple who were coming out at the same time, he recognised Captain Beck and his wife, and the sight added fuel to the flames. He hastened on; and was hardly to be recognised as the same man who had gone up the same way so quietly two hours before.

He had meant to go over at once to Sandvigen to see his father, but he thought that before going it would be as well to find out for certain all about Elizabeth; and his landlady seemed as likely a person to be able to satisfy him as any one. He remembered well that sharp, bright-eyed little woman, and knew that she was a regular magpie for chatter, and for repeating the gossip of the town.

At that time of the day on Sunday there were no other customers in the house, and while she was busying herself with preparations for his dinner, he asked casually if Captain Beck's son, the one in the navy, was married?



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“To be sure he is,” she replied, surprised to hear him speak Norwegian. “He has been married for—let me see—about three years.”

She looked fixedly at him.

“But who are you?” she asked; and then, as if the thought had suddenly flashed upon her, she said, “It’s never Salve Kristiansen, who—” She stopped here, and Salve dryly finished the sentence for her—

“Who deserted from Beck at Rio?—the same.”

Madam Gjers was agog with curiosity, and whispered, “I’ll say nothing—you may trust me;” and waited eagerly then for further particulars which she might take the first opportunity of retailing.

Salve assured her that he knew of old that a secret was always safe with her, and resumed then absently—

“So the lieutenant is married?”

“This long while,” she replied. “The wedding was at the house of the bride’s parents; and they are living now at Frederiksvaern.”

“Elizabeth had no parents,” said Salve, rather impatiently.

“Elizabeth?—oh! you mean the girl the Becks took to live with them. That is quite another story,” she said, significantly. “No, the lieutenant’s wife was Postmaster Forstberg’s daughter. The other was just a passing fancy—the end of it was that she had to go to Holland, poor thing! It was said she had got a place there.”

“Do you know anything for certain of this?” asked Salve, severely, and with an earnestness that put the little madam out of countenance, and made her be careful of her words.

“It was all done very secretly, that’s true,” she replied. “But she went away in the greatest possible hurry, and the affair was well enough known, more’s the pity—known and forgotten now, one may say.”

“What was known?” asked Salve, catching her up, angrily. “Did you see her, Madam Gjers?”

“Not I, indeed, nor no one else neither. The Becks were living out at Tromoe at the time; and there was just very good reason for—”



“Then neither you nor any one else who wants to take away her character know a jot more about the business than what you have chosen to invent,” said Salve, fiercely and contemptuously; for although he had slain Elizabeth himself in his heart, he must still defend her against the attacks of others. He felt quite sick and faint.

“I happen to know the rights of the case,” he said, with a short laugh, looking her coldly and sharply in the face, “and—” he sprang up suddenly here, and striking the table violently with his fist—“and I don’t taste another morsel in such a scandal-mongering house,” he cried. “Do you understand, madam? Be good enough to take what is owing to you out of that,” and flinging down a handful of silver on to the table, he sprang over it, and proceeded to drag his chest down-stairs himself.

Madam Gjers exhausted herself in a flood of deprecation, the gist of which was that she had only said and believed what she had heard from every creature in the town; but Salve was unappeasable, and slinging his chest over his back with a rope, he went down with it to the quay, with the intention of chartering a boat to take him over to his father. For the present, however, he remained sitting upon the chest, gazing out abstractedly over the harbour.



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The result of his reflections was that he gave up his idea of plying to Holland.

He took a boat to Sandvigen, but while they were on the way, he suddenly made the boatman change his course, and put in to the slip on the other side of the harbour. He must talk to Elizabeth's aunt. There was something in his mind all the time that wouldn't let him altogether believe the worst.

When he went in to the old woman, she recognised him at once.

"How do you do, Salve?" she said, quite calmly. "You have been a long while away—half a century almost."

She offered him a chair, but he remained standing, and asked abruptly—

"Is it true that Elizabeth—left Beck's like that—and went to Holland?"

"How do you mean like that?" she asked, sharply, while her face flushed slightly.

"As people say," replied Salve, with bitter emphasis.

"When people say it, a fool like you of course must believe it," she rejoined, derisively. "I don't understand why you want to come here to her old aunt for information when it seems you have so many other confidants about the town. But anyhow, she can tell you something different from them, my lad; and she wouldn't do it, if it wasn't that she knew the girl still loved you in spite of all the years you have been away, gadding about, God knows where, in the world. It's true enough she left Beck's one night and came here in the morning; but it was just for your sake, and no one else's, that she might get quit of the lieutenant. It was Madam Beck herself that got her a place in Holland, because she didn't want to have her for a daughter-in-law."

A wild gleam of joy broke over Salve's features for a moment, but they relapsed almost immediately into gloom.

"Was she not engaged to Carl Beck, then?" he asked.

"Yes and no," replied the old woman, cautiously, not wishing to depart a hair's-breadth from the truth. "She allowed herself to be betrayed into saying 'yes,' but fled from the house because she didn't want to have him. She told me, with tears in her eyes, that she repented having said 'no' to you."

"So that was the way of it," he rejoined sarcastically. "The 'yes' and 'no' meant that the Becks wouldn't have her for a daughter-in-law, and bundled her out of the house over to Holland; and you want me to believe it was for my sake she went. God knows," he added, sadly, and shaking his head slowly, "I would willingly believe it—more willingly than I can say; but I can't, Mother Kirstine. You are her aunt, and want of course to—"



“I’m afraid it is your misfortune, Salve,” she broke in severely, “not to have it in your power to believe thoroughly in any one creature upon this earth; you’ll be always doubting, always listening to folks’ talk. With the thoughts you have now in your mind, you have at any rate no business any longer inside my door. But there is one thing I’ll ask of you,” she said, with a look of mildly impressive earnestness in her strong, clever face. “I know Elizabeth’s nature well, and don’t you attempt to approach her or try to win her as long as you have a trace of those doubts about her in your heart—it would only bring unhappiness to both of you.”



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He looked dejected; and as he said good-bye to her, offered to take her hand. But she would not give it to him, and merely added instead—

“Remember that it is an old woman who has seen a good deal in the world who tells you this.”

He went away then; and while he was being rowed across to Sandvigen he changed his mind again, and determined that his plan of plying to Holland should be carried out.

CHAPTER XIX.

Skipper Garvloit, into whose family Elizabeth had come, occupied one of the many-storeyed houses, with green window-shutters, narrow entrance-doors, and polished brass knockers, after the usual Dutch fashion, in the lively street leading down to the dock in Amsterdam, with the canal on the other side, with its various bridges, and vessels and barges of all kinds unloading, running up from it into the heart of the town.

Madam Garvloit had four young children, and was not very strong, so that Elizabeth's robust, healthy nature had been a perfect godsend to her in the house, and she was content to overlook her occasional shortcomings of manner or temper in consideration of the assistance which she rendered in every department of the housekeeping.

Elizabeth had always had a pretty strong will of her own; and here, where she virtually had the control of everything, her tendency to self-assertion had been considerably developed. The force and decision with which she gave her opinion about everything seemed to Madam Garvloit sometimes (although she said nothing) rather like a reversing of their relative positions; and on days when she was in a captious humour—and those were her days of most feverish activity—she would even go so far as to set aside her mistress's orders altogether. In a general way her moods were very uncertain: one day she would be in tearing spirits, racing up and down the stairs with the children, as if she had been inhaling the wild air of Torungen again; and another she would be so pensive and taciturn that they thought she must be pining after home.

She had many admirers, both among young and old, her gay moods attracting the former, and her serious ones the latter. Among the former were two young gentlemen acquaintances of the house, relatives of Garvloit—one a smart young clerk from one of the larger counting-houses in the town, who rather affected the gentleman; and the other a light-haired, pink-complexioned, skipper's son from Vlieland. They both came regularly every Sunday, were frantically jealous of one another, tried to outbid each other whenever an opportunity offered, and were both fully convinced that they sighed in vain. She was so different, they felt, from the other specimens of femininity of their acquaintance to whom their weak attentions had sometimes proved acceptable. There was something almost imperious in Elizabeth's manner at times that made them feel



quite small beside her; and however careless she might be of the *convenances* in her way of speaking to them, they had very soon found that wherever she chose to draw the line, so far could they go and no farther.



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Madame Garvloit would take her to task sometimes for the scant courtesy with which she treated the young clerk. Elizabeth would answer that he bored her; and Madame Garvloit would insist that a young girl ought to have tact enough not to make this evident. Elizabeth, however, was not deficient in tact, but disliked putting a restraint upon her feelings; and it seemed to her on the whole unreasonable that a person should pretend that a thing was pleasant when in reality it was wearisome.

During the second autumn of her service with the Garvloits, the skipper, on his return from a trip to Norway, brought the intelligence that Lieutenant Beck was engaged to Postmaster Forstberg's daughter in Arendal, and he had many messages for Elizabeth from the latter. They were to be married in the spring.

Elizabeth was overjoyed to hear it, for the thought had often weighed heavily on her mind that Carl Beck might be making himself miserable on her account. She judged so from her own feeling for Salve: and as she sat alone by her window at bedtime that night, gazing out over the canal and the shipping in the calm moonlight, the quiet afterglow of a holiday evening seemed to have shed itself over her thoughts. She knew from her friend's message that she was ignorant of what had passed between herself and Carl Beck; and although it was a relief to think that he had not taken his disappointment more to heart, the smile that played about her lips for a moment showed at the same time that his love had been duly appraised. As the shadow, then, of the window-frame in the moonlight, crept slowly over the wall above her bed, her thoughts glided off in the direction they loved best to take—over the world and far away to Salve.

She sat with her heavy hair falling loose over her well-shaped shoulders, and her face grew more and more sorrowful in its absent expression, and would twitch occasionally with pain. The bitter thought would recur that it was she who was the cause of Salve's going out into the world and becoming a desperate man. The thought haunted her; and yet, much as she wished to free herself from it, she found a pleasure in dwelling on it. She saw him, in fancy, miserable and proud, with his pale face and keen, clever eyes fixed upon her in hatred, as the cause of his unhappiness, and then the idea occurred to her to put on sailor's clothes and go and seek him out in the world. But if she were to find him, she knew, on the other hand, that for very shame she dared not show herself before him, having as good as belonged to another; and she would not for all the world read her hard dismissal in his eye. She laid her head upon her arms on the window-sill and sobbed convulsively, until at length she dropped off to sleep where she sat.

She had been three years in the Garvloits' house when Garvloit had the misfortune to run his vessel aground out near Amland, where she became a wreck. He lost with her nearly all he had in the world, and what was worse, all prospect of livelihood for the future as skipper.



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An uncomfortable feeling prevailed now in the house, and Elizabeth saw with regret that she would have to leave. Garvloit, who in figure resembled some thick, short-legged animal of the sea, a seal or walrus come on land, had become perceptibly reduced in flesh, and went about all day long in his shirtsleeves, fanning himself with a large silk pocket-handkerchief. On one particular afternoon it was observed that he indulged in this exercise with more than his usual vigour and restlessness; and it was not without cause. He had had an inspiration. If he could no longer follow his old trade, he would try a new one; he would set up a house of entertainment for sailors. His house being so close to the dock, could not be more favourably situated for the purpose, and they had ample accommodation. On the ground floor they could have a room for common sailors, and on the floor above they had one where captains and mates could be served.

He said nothing about it, however, to any one until the scheme had been fully matured; and then all of a sudden one day he came into the room where his wife was, with a bundle of printed placards and a large board in his hand.

“Good gracious, Garvloit, what is that?” she cried.

He turned the board round with an important air, and without saying a word. Upon it there stood in large gilt letters, “The Star.”

“This is our new means of earning our bread, wife,” he said. “Next month this sign hangs over our door, and these bills are to post on the walls, and distribute among the ships down in the harbour. Garvloit is not on his beam-ends yet,” he concluded, with self-conscious satisfaction; and proceeded then to explain how he intended to be landlord himself, and how Elizabeth was to help him in the management of the whole.

Madam Garvloit only made one slight objection—

“You know that you can’t drink ale, my friend.”

Another objection, namely, what they would say at home in Norway when they heard that her husband had sunk into a mere tavern-keeper, she very wisely kept to herself. The important point was that they should find a way of living, and they had at all events the great consolation that now they would be able to keep Elizabeth. What feeling of pride still remained she got rid of in telling Elizabeth that at home they knew nothing of millionaires in wooden shoes such as were to be found in Holland; and her husband found her much more keen for his project than he had expected. Being accustomed to place great reliance upon her stronger understanding, he would not have been happy if she had been against the plan.

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Thus it came about, then, that in the crowded street by the canal one Monday morning there appeared over one of the entrance-doors a sign-board with “The Star,” in letters of gold on a blue ground. It was set up at a fortunate time and in a fortunate place, and almost as soon as the house was opened, customers from the vessels in the harbour began to gather in, both into the down-stairs and up-stairs rooms, so that there was a prospect of a steadily increasing traffic. Garvloit generally presided himself in the bar behind the counter, at the lower end of which there stood an array of stone mugs with tin lids; while in a recess of the wall there stuck out from beside canisters of tobacco, long and short Dutch clay pipes, a new one filled being handed to every customer, with whatever drink he ordered. Out of sight under the counter where the stone mugs stood was the ale-barrel, with its bright tap over a vessel that caught the drip; and after the same cleanly Dutch fashion, spittoons filled with sand stood in every corner of the room. The shelves above were filled in rows with a regular apothecary’s shop of bottles and jars of spirits, and among them a goodly array of securely-fastened, dark-green flasks of Dutch hollands.

Elizabeth had as housekeeper quite as much as she could do, and did not directly busy herself with waiting, unless there was something particular required to be done for the up-stairs customers. Occasionally, however, she would come into the bar also, on some errand or another, or to make sure that nothing was wanted; and the fame of handsome Elizabeth of “The Star” contributed not a little to bring custom to the house.

Such Norwegians as came to Amsterdam with timber—the majority unloaded their cargoes up at Puermurende or Alkmar—invariably patronised “The Star.” Elizabeth used to talk to them as countrymen of her own; and if she heard that any of them had been across the Atlantic, she would quietly, and as if quite casually, ask if perchance they had come across or had heard anything of a sailor of her acquaintance called Salve Kristiansen who hailed from Arendal. No one had ever heard of him, and she had begun to fear that he might be lost to her for ever.

One forenoon, however, when she had a great deal to do in the house, she was passing quickly through the room up-stairs, and there sat at one of the small tables, with an untouched mug of ale before him, a bearded man in a blue pea-jacket. In her hurry she had set him down as some mate or captain; but there must have been something about him that attracted her attention, for she turned again at the door for an instant, and looked at him before she went out. He was so pale—and he had sent her one look.



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As she stood outside the door she knew it was Salve, although she had always pictured him to herself as a common sailor. She stood there trembling all over, and fumbling with the latch of the door in the greatest agitation, evidently debating with herself whether she should dare go in again. She pressed upon the latch, in the certainty that it would go up before she had actually decided that she would go in; and it did so. The door opened again of itself, and Elizabeth entered with downcast eyes, and scarlet in the face, and passed through the room, making a slight inclination of her head, as if for greeting, as she passed him. She had reached the opposite door when she heard a quiet bitter laugh behind her.

At once she turned, with pride in every feature of her face, and looked at him.

“How do you do, Salve Kristiansen?” she said, firmly and quietly.

“How do you do, Elizabeth?” he replied, rather huskily, getting up and looking confused.

“Are you lying here in Amsterdam with some vessel?”

He sat down again, for there was something in her manner that denied approach.

“No; in Puermurende,” he replied. “I only came in here to—”

“You are in the timber line, then, now?”

“Yes—Elizabeth,” he ventured to add, in another tone, which had a whole volume of meaning in it. But she took her leave of him now in the same proud manner, and left the room.

Salve sat for a while with compressed lips, looking down upon the table before him. When she turned round the first time at the door, something told him that she would come in again; but he had expected quite a different kind of scene. A good deal of the tyrant had been developed in him since they had last met; and when she had come in so quietly and so humbly, with the acknowledgment of the great wrong she had done him written upon her face, he felt himself at once, with a certain bitter and devouring pleasure, upon the judgment-seat. He must first see her crushed before him; then he would have forgiven her, and loved her with all the passion of his soul.

But as she stood there by the door, looking so grand in her pride, and so pale with repressed mortification, and spoke so calmly, he had felt that in that moment he had been separated farther from her than ever he had been in all his wanderings at the other side of the globe.

He sat there with his mind in a chaotic state of desperation and sorrow, and of anger with himself. What a grand creature she was! and he—how pitiful and petty! He set down the mug, which he had been absently toying with, hard on the table, and went out.



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For a long while he wandered about the quays in a state of gloomy indecision, stopping every now and then to run his eye over the shipping, and his expression becoming darker still every time he did so. From long practice he could tell by the appearance of every vessel what trade it was engaged in. One was a coffee ship from Java; the next carried general cargo to all parts of the world; there was another that brought sugar and rum from the West Indies; and a fourth, that from its square build and breadth of beam must be a whaler returned from Spitzbergen. He thought of their long voyages, and of the life without root or tie that was passed on board them—was he to go back to that life again? It depended on Elizabeth; and he had not much hope.

To his impatient nature delay was intolerable; and he had half made up his mind to have his fate decided at once. In spite of his agitation, however, he could still think with coolness; and he knew that if he was to have any chance at all, he must wait until the first unfortunate impression had had time to pass off.

It had been a grey, foggy autumn day, but was now clearing, and blue patches of sky were coming out; and as he crossed the bridge the afternoon sun shone out, and sent a ray of glittering light against the window-panes of the street along the canal. Up in Garvloit's house Elizabeth was standing at the open window—she, too, that day had needed to be alone with her thoughts. Salve saw her, and stood still for a moment contemplating her as she leant out over the window ledge.

“That dear head shall be mine,” he burst out then passionately, and without knowing it, aloud; and the next moment he was at Garvloit's door.

Elizabeth heard the door of the room open behind her; and when she saw Salve unexpectedly standing before her, she sank down for a moment on to a chair, but got up the next with a scared look, almost as if he was some hostile apparition.

“Elizabeth!” he said, gently, “are you going to send me out again into the world? God only knows how I shall come back if you do.”

She did not answer, but stood looking at him with a rigid expression, and pale as death; she seemed to have forgotten to breathe, and to be only waiting for him to say more.

“Be my wife, Elizabeth,” he asked, “and I shall grow up into a good man again. What a pitiful creature I have been without you, you have already seen sufficiently this morning.”

“God be my witness, Salve,” she answered, the tears bursting into her eyes with emotion which she tried to control, “you alone have always had my heart—but I must first know in perfect truth what you think of me.”



“The same as I think of God’s angels, Elizabeth,” he said from his heart, and tried to take her hand.

“Do you know that I—was once very nearly engaged to young Beck?” she asked, reddening, but with a steady look. “I didn’t know my real self then, but was thinking only of folly and nonsense, until I was obliged to fly from it all.”



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“Your aunt has told me all about it, Elizabeth. Don’t let us mention the subject again.”

“And you haven’t a doubt about me in your heart? For that I never will bear, Salve, like to-day,—I can’t bear it, do you understand?” she said, with a shake in her voice, and looking as it were down into his very soul.

“Doubt!” he said; and for that moment, at all events, he was evidently convinced that she had never given her real heart to any one but himself.

A look of inexpressible happiness came into her face; he caught her into his arms, and they stood as if they never would let go of each other again, cheek to cheek, not speaking, not thinking even. There was something convulsive in their embrace, as if they could not believe in the reality of their happiness, and as if they felt an instinctive dread that they should lose it again.

Unobserved by either of them the door had opened, and in the doorway stood pursy Garvloit, gazing in helpless bewilderment at the scene before him. At last Elizabeth caught sight of him, and—not with any confusion, but only eager to communicate her happiness—exclaimed—

“It is my lover—”

“Your lover!” and he fell back a step, as if he did not know what he was doing.

“My name is Salve Kristiansen, master of the Apollo,” added Salve, without letting her go, and feeling everything around him infinitely small at that moment.

Garvloit turned round and shouted several times from the top of the stairs, raising his voice at each repetition, “Andrea! Andrea!” to his wife; and as she did not come immediately, he stumbled as fast as his corpulence would allow him down the stairs, pausing, however, with a vacant look upon the last step.

Madam Garvloit came out with her work in her hand, and asked what the matter was.

“The matter is,” replied her husband, dismally, “that I am ruined. There is Elizabeth up there sitting with some skipper, God knows whom, who she says is her lover.”

“Is it possible?”

“Go and see for yourself;” and as his wife hurried past him up the stairs, he added in the same dismal tone—“Who shall we get to look after the house now? we shall never have another like her;” and he sighed profoundly.

When Madam Garvloit appeared at the door, Elizabeth finished her interrupted explanation.



“I have known him ever since I was a little girl,” she said.

It was at once evident to her mistress that there must be a romantic story here; but though brimming over with curiosity, she deferred her questions until a more convenient season. In the meantime she manifested the most lively sympathy; and after winning Salve’s heart by telling him what a treasure Elizabeth had been to her, she begged that as long as he remained in Amsterdam he would come in and out of the house as he pleased.

CHAPTER XX.



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When Madam Garvloit had made some excuse next morning to leave the two alone together in her sitting-room, Salve took out of his pocket a small parcel, and opening it deliberately, said, with a certain solemnity—

“Five years ago, Elizabeth, when I was in Boston, I bought these rings.” He took them out of the paper, and laid them in her hand. “I have had a good deal to bear since, but you see I have kept them all along notwithstanding.”

She threw her arms round his neck, hid her face upon his breast, and he could feel that she was crying. She tried them on then, both on the same finger, and holding up the hand to show him, said—

“That is the first ring I ever possessed.”

A shadow passed across his face, and it flushed slightly; and she only then perceived what connection of ideas her remark might have suggested.

He had three days to spare before he was obliged to be back at Puermurende on board the old brig of which he was now master, and with which, patched and leaky though she was, after his sailor’s pride had been overcome, he had grown to be well satisfied enough—more particularly, perhaps, because she was his own. The happiness of these days was not marred by a single further incident to remind him of the past; and it was only on the day that he was to leave that the foul fiend Distrust was again awakened in his unlucky heart.

It was a Sunday, and after the morning service there was to be a sort of popular *fete* in Amsterdam. At the famous town-hall, where, in Holland’s great days, when De Ruyter’s and Van Tromp’s guns were thundering in the sea outside, the great merchant princes used to sit round the republican council-board, was to be exhibited that day, for the first time, the new picture of the young Dutch hero, Van Spyck, who blew up his ship in the war of 1830 against Belgium.

Salve and Elizabeth joined the stream, and even caught some of the national enthusiasm prevailing in the crowd that was swaying backwards and forwards in the courtyard, where a band was playing the stirring national air, “Wien Neerlands bloed door de aders vloeit.”

At last they found themselves before the canvas. It represented the young cadet of seventeen years on the gunboat at the supreme moment.

Elizabeth stood with her hands clasped before her silently engrossed, while Salve kept her from being pressed upon behind.

“Look!” she said, turning half round to him, but without taking her eyes off the picture,—“the Belgian captain is inviting him to surrender. He has no choice—they are too many



for him. But don't you see the thought he has in his mind?—you can read it in his face. And what a fine fellow he looks, with his handsome uniform, and his epaulets, and his short sword!" she said, in a lower tone, with a revival of her old childish enthusiasm for that kind of show.

Her last words were like a dagger's thrust to Salve. She still had a hankering, then, for all this, and he stood behind her pale with suppressed feeling, while she continued to gaze at the picture and think aloud to him.



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“Poor, handsome lad! But he never will surrender—one can easily see that; and so he must go down,” she said, in a subdued voice, involuntarily folding her hands, as if in fancy she went with him; “and he blows up Belgian and all into the air, Salve,” she said, turning to him with a fine spirited look in her face, and with moistened eyes.

He made no reply; and supposing that, like herself, he was lost in the scene before them, she turned again to the picture. But while, after giving vent to her feelings, she stood there with a smile on her face, thinking that she knew one who would have been quite as capable as Van Spyck of such an exploit—the man, namely, who was then standing behind her—to him the picture had become a hateful thing; and he could have shot Van Spyck through the heart for his uniform’s sake.

The whole of the way home he was silent and serious, and it was not until late in the afternoon that he at all recovered his spirits.

As this was to be his last trip for the year, the following spring was fixed for their marriage; and when he took his leave, it was with the gloomy presentiment that he had a dreary winter before him.

Certainly, for the development of a morbid state of mind, no conditions could have been more favourable than the enforced inactivity to which, with many another, he was condemned for the long dark months during which the ice put a stop to navigation. To his restless, energetic nature, such prolonged inaction was little suited under any circumstances, and in his present condition of mind it was little less than disastrous.

“If she was only here!” he would sometimes inwardly exclaim, as if crying out for help against himself and the thoughts which he felt to be unworthy, but which nevertheless he could not shake off.

He often thought of writing to her, but was so afraid of saying something which he might afterwards regret, that he kept putting it off from time to time, until at last he could restrain himself no longer.

His letter ran as follows:—

“To much esteemed Miss Elizabeth Raklev—

“As concerning the Apollo, she lies in a row of other ships up in Selvig Sound, and the ice is about a foot thick, and will be late in breaking up this year, they all prophesy: she is well looked after, and has a watchman on board, and storage room has been taken for her rigging in Pettersen’s rigging-loft. But as touching her captain, to whom you said in Amsterdam you had given your full and first heart so firmly that it couldn’t be moved by any might or power in the world whatsoever—he has thought much and often about this, and would like to hold out and see you again before all his shore cable is chafed



away. It seems as if it was holding by its last threads, and these half-scraped through. But if I could see you, it would become so strong again that it could hold against any stream; and you must forgive me for my weakness when you think of



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those five years; but I won't say that it is your fault, neither make myself out better than I am, for I have confidence in you, Elizabeth, if I have not the same reliance upon myself, and I can't help it if I haven't. When you read this letter, Elizabeth, you must remember the poor sailor who is frozen up here, and not forget it afterwards till we meet again, which I would give half my life-blood or more for, if it was any use, as I am consuming away with impatience up here—I have such a longing to see you again. And now, farewell from my heart, and God bless you. I will trust you and hope in you till my last hour, come what may. Farewell, my dearest girl, with fond love from

“SALVE KRISTIANSEN.”

This letter cost Elizabeth many a tear. She sat over it in the evenings before she went to bed, and felt so poignantly that it was she who had brought him to this—that he could not trust her; for she understood but too well what lay between the lines. “If I could only be with him,” she thought, and she longed to be able to send him an answer; but she had never learnt properly how to write or to compose a letter.

With some difficulty, however, and after several ineffectual attempts, she managed to put two lines together which she remembered from the Catechism:—

“To my lover Salve Kristiansen—

“You shall put your trust in God, and after Him, in me before all others, who careth for you in all things, and have faith in me. That is the truth from your ever-unforgetting

“ELIZABETH RAKLEV.

And in the spring,

“ELIZABETH KRISTIANSEN.”

She folded the letter, and got one of Garvloit's sons to write the address; but, that it might be certain to go, she went with it herself to the post-office.

Salve received it one day with great surprise. He guessed from whom it came, and delayed opening it in the fear that it might contain a breaking off of their engagement occasioned by his own letter: he remembered that first morning in Amsterdam. What was his joy, then, when he found what the contents actually were; he seemed to have the thing now in black-and-white. He put the letter carefully back into his pocket-book every time after reading it, and for a while was quite another man. Still, it was high time that the ice should begin to break up, and that he should find occupation for his thoughts in work; he had begun to be afraid to be alone with them.



His first voyage was to Puermurende, and thence to Amsterdam; and they determined to be married there and then, although he had but four days to stay while the brig was loading in Puermurende. Out of consideration for the Garvloits, whom they wished to spare the expense of the wedding as much as possible, they insisted that they would be married on the day they were to leave for Puermurende.



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The morning on which the wedding took place, Garvloit's house put forth all its splendour. Dress suits from former days of better circumstances were brought out from old boxes for the occasion; and Madam Garvloit appeared in a green-silk dress of stiff brocade, with a massive brooch, and a huge gilt comb that shone over her forehead like a piece of a crown. Garvloit, too, did his best; but his utmost endeavour had only availed to adapt one article of his grandfather's state dress to his corpulent person—a gold-laced waistcoat namely, which was much too long for him, and which appeared to occasion him extreme discomfort in the region of the buttons.

A couple of old friends of the family and the children went with the pair to church, and also the skipper's son from Vlieland, over whose round soft cheeks there trickled a regretful tear or two as the bride, with her myrtle wreath and long white veil, was led up to the altar by Garvloit. Elizabeth wore that day a pair of particularly handsome shoes with silver buckles, which Salve, with glad surprise, recognised as the ones he had presented to her many years before.

There was an entertainment provided by Madam Garvloit when they returned from church, which was not a very lively affair, the Garvloits not being in spirits at the prospect of losing Elizabeth, and she, notwithstanding all her present happiness, being really sorry to go.

A couple of hours after, they were on their way to Puermurende, and later on in the mellow evening, were standing together on the deck of the Apollo, as she was being towed up the wide canal. The bells were ringing out from Alkmar as they passed—ringing a sweet old chime of other days; and as they stood together by the ship's side, silently listening to the changing tones from the tower as they mingled in the air above them, they pleased themselves with the thought that it was their wedding chime.

CHAPTER XXI.

In a small house at Tonsberg, at the entrance to the beautiful Christiana fjord, the first summer of their married life passed without a cloud upon its sky. The house and all about it, with its flowers in each window, were a model of neatness and Dutch polish; and with Elizabeth herself as a centre to it all, it was no wonder that Salve's crew found him indifferent to all weathers when it was a question of getting home.

The charming young skipper's wife, however, during her husband's frequent absences, had attracted the notice of some of the leading families of the town, and had come presently to be if not exactly on intimate terms, at all events on a footing of acquaintanceship with many of them; and Salve's enjoyment of his home ceased then to be so perfectly unalloyed.



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When Elizabeth recounted to him the flattering proofs of appreciation which she received, he listened in silence; and her social successes, instead of giving him pleasure, had a precisely opposite effect. He would not for the world have said a word to express his dislike of her making such acquaintances; and he even, when they went to church together on Sundays, liked her to be as well-dressed as any of these fine friends who now seemed to share his wife with him. But if he said nothing, and was even angry with himself for thinking about the subject, still he did think about it, and with increasing irritation. He could not get the idea out of his head that Elizabeth must now be always contrasting him unfavourably with these people; and as he paced the deck of his brig alone out at sea, he would picture them to himself as constantly in his house, and always talking on the subject which he could least endure—the sacrifice which Elizabeth must have made to become his wife.

When their son Gjert was born in the spring following their marriage, he had been sitting by Elizabeth's bedside unable to tear himself away from her and the cradle, until a small present arrived from one of her friends in the town, who with others had often sent to inquire after her, when he got up and went straight out of the house and paced backwards and forwards with his hands behind his back outside, as she could see through the window, thoroughly out of humour, though when he came in again he was even more affectionate and attentive to her than before.

As she never for a moment imagined that he could think her deep love for him could be in any way affected by the slight surface interest which her new acquaintances afforded her, she looked upon his jealousy of them, of which she had had indications often enough before, as a weakness merely to which he ought to have been superior; and as he said nothing himself on the subject, she also let it pass without comment on her side, but determined at the same time that she would see less of them in future, at all events while he was at home.

It happened however, unluckily, some weeks afterwards, that she had just been talking to some of them when he returned from an expedition to Notteroe to hire a crew for his next voyage to Amsterdam, on which she was to accompany him. "Herr Jurgensen and his wife," she said, "had just passed, and she had been talking to them; they were to start for Frederiksvoern on the following day."

"And fancy!" she went on with animation, "Fru Jurgensen knows Marie Forstberg. So I asked her to remember me to her."

"Marie Forstberg?—who is she?" asked Salve.

"She who was so kind to me,"—she stopped here, and the colour came and went in her face as she continued—"it was she who married—Beck's son—the lieutenant."

“You ought to have asked Fru Jurgensen to remember me to Beck then at the same time,” he said, cuttingly, and went past her into the house without looking her in the face.



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Elizabeth followed him, feeling very uncomfortable, and after standing for a moment in indecision, went over to him, and sitting down on his knee, put her arm round his neck, saying—

“You are not angry with me, are you? I didn’t think you would mind, or I wouldn’t have done it.”

“Oh! it’s quite immaterial to me, of course, who you send your love to.”

“She was my best friend when I was—in Arendal,” Elizabeth said, avoiding the mention of Beck’s name again.

“I don’t doubt you are on the best possible terms with all these people,” Salve said, impatiently, and making a movement as if he would get up from his seat.

It was Elizabeth who rose first.

“Salve!” she exclaimed, and was about to add more, when he pulled her down to him again, and said in a gentle tone of remorse—

“Forgive me, Elizabeth. I didn’t mean what I said. But I do so hate hearing you talk of these people.”

Elizabeth burst into tears, protesting against his want of confidence in her; and Salve, now thoroughly distressed at the result of his want of self-control, overwhelmed her with tenderness in his endeavours to appease her. He succeeded after a while, and the evening was passed in such sunshine as only succeeds to storm.

After a quarrel of the kind, however, there must be always something left behind, and though Salve was doubly affectionate for many days, afterwards he grew more and more silent, and presently even irritable and moody, and would not go to church on any of the succeeding Sundays while he remained at home.

CHAPTER XXII.

Elizabeth carried out her intention of accompanying him to Amsterdam, where she paid a visit of several days to the Garvloits, and the pleasure of the trip was only alloyed for her by the change which had come over Salve’s manner, and to which she had now to try and accustom herself as one does to a less brilliant light after having seen the sun.

They were on their way home again, sailing before a light breeze, and under a soft blue sky, out of the busy, shallow Zuyder Zee. Elizabeth was sitting on deck with little Gjert, blooming as a rose, and asking animated questions of the pilot, whom they had been



compelled to take on board, about the various flat sandy islands and towns which came in sight from time to time, Salve occasionally stopping in his walk to listen.

By Terschelling the channel from the Zuyder Zee to the North Sea is marked out like a narrow strait with black and red buoys; and even in that calm weather there were foaming breakers the whole way close to the ship on either side. "What must it be like," Elizabeth asked, in a sort of terror, "in a storm, when the whole sea was driving in?"

"That is a sight it's better not to see," replied the pilot.

"But you have to be out, storm or not, pilot?"

"It is my way of getting a living," he answered, shortly.



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Salve stood and listened, as the conversation took this turn.

“We have pilots in Norway, too,” she said, “who don’t mind a wet jacket either. It is a fine life!”

The Dutchman merely observed, coldly, in reply—

“In two successive years—it is three years ago now—they lost out here off Amland a total of fifty pilots.”

“Still, it is a fine life!” she said; and Salve resumed his walk.

A couple of evenings after, the Apollo was pitching out on the Doggerbank in the moonlight, with a reef in her topsails. Elizabeth had not yet gone below, and was sitting with her child warmly wrapped up on her lap, while Salve paced the deck and looked at her from time to time. A little farther off, near the main-hatch, Nils Buvaagen (whom Salve had met again at Notteroe, and persuaded to take service with him) and a couple of the crew who were off duty were engaged in story-telling, the others lounging about near them to listen. Elizabeth, too, was listening.

They had crossed that day a long stretch of dead water, and the carpenter had several mysterious incidents, of which he declared he had been an eyewitness, to recount on the head of it. Meeting dead water like that out in the open sea generally meant that something was going to happen.

Nils Buvaagen, like all fjord peasants, had a strong leaning towards every kind of superstition; and in his many voyages across the North Sea, he had had more than one experience of the kind in question. He had sat quite silent so far.

“H’m!” he remarked now, thoughtfully taking a pull at his pipe. “I dare be sworn there’s many a one out here on the Dogger. Where we are now, I tell you, is as it might be an old burial-ground.”

With that he retired into himself, and began to pull away vigorously at his pipe, as if he had unintentionally said more than he exactly liked. But being pressed to go on, he was obliged to satisfy the curiosity he had excited, and resumed accordingly in a hushed tone, after cautiously looking round first.

“Do you know,” he asked, mysteriously, “how all the old fish come by their deaths?”

None of his audience were able to give an answer to this unexpected question.

“You don’t?” he continued; “nor no one else neither. But all the same, such myriads die every day that, if all was right, the whole surface of the sea would be covered with their white bellies—we should be sailing all day long through dead fish. It is a ‘mystery,’ the



same as it is what becomes of all the old ships in the world.” Coming from him, that word “mystery” had something very weird and uncanny about it.

“Yes, the Dogger can be ugly enough, and may be so perhaps before we are clear of it,” he concluded, and leant back against the spar behind him to look up at the clouds. Some scud was driving at the moment across the full moon.

“But about the old fish and the old vessels, Nils?” said the carpenter, recalling him to the subject.



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“Yes, it is here, to the Dogger Bank, that they resort for the most part, and to one or two other places perhaps in the world besides. That is the reason that there is always a sort of corpse sand in the water here, and so many noises and things that one can’t explain.”

There was a general start as he said this, and they looked at one another in silence; for it seemed as if the vessel had suddenly stopped with a shock in the middle of her course, and the spray from a heavy sea came pouring down over the deck.

“She heard it,” said the carpenter, involuntarily; “she is an old craft, and doesn’t like going over the churchyard.”

Elizabeth thought that last proposition sounded so uncomfortable that she got up and went below to bed.

The sea ran high in the night, and the vessel kept pitching with dull thuds as if they were in very shoal water, which, however, the lead showed not to be the case. In the morning the chain-cable of the anchor was found tossed by the force of the sand-laden seas right over the deck, and arranged there with a certain regularity. To many of the crew it seemed clear that other than natural causes must have been at work; there were evidently “dead hands” upon the bank, and this was a warning. Nils shook his head and said nothing.

All the morning they were enveloped in a thick sea fog that surrounded them like a wall; but towards noon the sun began to appear like a sickly gleam above them, and by dinner-time they were sailing under a clear sky, and in a fresh green breezy sea, with sails on every side.

It was an exhilarating sight, and reminded Elizabeth of the days of her childhood. She called Salve over to share her enjoyment of it.

Of all the vessels in sight, the handsomest, without comparison, was the North Star, a Norwegian corvette, well known along the coast of Norway, and which had often aroused Elizabeth’s enthusiasm in earlier days. She was crossing their course, and standing under full sail for the Channel. Elizabeth recognised her at once, and exclaimed decisively—

“That is the North Star—isn’t she a magnificent ship, Salve! See, they are taking in the topsails; they look like a flock of birds up there on the yard among those beautiful big sails. Did you ever see anything so grand as her shape? and how majestically she ploughs through the sea! When she has all her canvas spread like that, I could fancy Tordenskjold himself on board of her in full chase.”

Salve looked straight before him and didn’t answer. He knew, what Elizabeth had not the faintest suspicion of, that Lieutenant Beck was on board the North Star, as third in

command for that year's cruise in the Mediterranean, whither she was now bound; and a host of unpleasant associations were raised by Elizabeth's innocent admiration of her.

"It was the North Star," she continued, "that beat through the straits of Gibraltar against the current when none of the others could." The North Star had long ago taken the place of the Naiad as her heroine ship, and she related the performance with a certain pride.

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“How would you like to be in command of a ship like that, Salve?” she asked, determined to wake him up and get an answer.

“It would be a very different thing from having such an old tub as the Apollo under one—there’s no disputing that,” he replied bitterly; and quitted her side abruptly, as if to give orders to the crew.

Elizabeth remained standing where she was, utterly puzzled. What could there possibly have been in what she had said to offend him? and offended he certainly was by the tone of voice in which he was giving his orders, and the expression of his face as he stood there by the wheel with his hand in the breast of his pea-jacket—she felt certain it was clenched there. It was really too unreasonable—the idea of his being jealous of a ship! This uncertainty about every word she spoke now was getting absolutely insupportable, and with a toss of her head she determined that she would stand it no longer, but would speak her mind to him once for all, whether it should lead to a scene or not.

No opportunity, however, for carrying out her intention occurred during the remainder of the afternoon. There appeared to be bad weather coming up, and many of the sails had to be taken in; and afterwards he paced up and down by the round-house forward for a couple of hours, purposely, as she could see, avoiding her. The crew apparently had an impression, too, that it was as well to keep out of his way, as they left him that side of the deck to himself, and stood talking in knots about the capstan, with their oilskin coats and sou’westers on, in anticipation of dirty weather, and casting anxious glances from time to time at the banks of cloud that were rolling up darkly from the horizon to leeward, and sending already a whine through the old rigging above them. They waited impatiently for the word to take in more sail, as it was obvious that they must go with storm sails only for the night.

It was only at the last moment apparently that Salve made up his mind, for when he suddenly shouted over to them to take in topsails and put a couple of reefs in the mainsail, the storm was already upon them. He sprang aft at the same time and seized the trumpet, saying shortly and harshly to Elizabeth as he passed her hurriedly, and almost without looking at her—

“This is not weather for sitting up on deck, Elizabeth. You had better take the child below and lie down.”

Elizabeth saw that he was right, and went; but there was a look of pained surprise in her face as she lingered for a moment and looked after him. He had never spoken to her like that before.

The crew had supposed that he would of course keep away and run before the gale, and not strain the old brig by beating to windward in such a night as they saw before



them; and it was under mute protest, therefore, that they proceeded to carry out his orders to clap on preventer braces on the rags of sail which they were carrying. The old blocks creaked and screamed in the increasing darkness above the rattle of the hail squalls, and the vessel careened over and went plunging into the head seas with successive shocks that seemed likely very soon to shake her to pieces.



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Nils Buvaagen was standing in moody silence, with another, at the wheel, and he could see by the light from the binnacle, which occasionally fell upon Salve's face as he walked up and down near them to leeward, that he was ashy pale. He would have liked to say something, but it didn't seem advisable.

"Topsail's flapping!" came from forward, "she'll be taken aback!"

"She's an old craft, captain—her topmasts'll not bear a great deal," Nils ventured to observe.

"I'll show you that I can make the old tub go," muttered Salve between his teeth, affecting not to have heard what was said.

"Keep her away, Nils—she must have more way—and so over on a new tack," was his reply in a peremptory tone.

"Stand by to 'bout ship!"

Nils sighed: such sailing was quite indefensible; and there was not one of the crew who had not the same feeling.

Through the darkness and the blinding dash of the seas came then at intervals—

"Haul in the boom—hard a-lee—brace forward—brace aft!" and here there was a longer interval, for one of the ropes on the foremast had apparently got foul, and there was a difficulty in bracing the yard, the sail flapping with a dull noise above and making the whole mast tremble. One of the crew had to mount the old rigging at the risk of his life, and feel over the unsteady yard in the dark for the rope and disentangle it, with the white tops of the seas breaking not far under his feet.

"Sharp up aft—sharp forward!" came then again. "Haul the jib-sheet!" but no sooner was the jib hauled taut and made fast, than it broke loose and hung fluttering wildly about the stay until it gradually twisted itself up into a tangle.

The sails filled on the new tack; but they were not much better off than before, the sea breaking over them with such violence that the deck, from amidships forward, was only passable with the greatest difficulty and danger. The crew began to think the captain must have taken leave of his senses; and, in fact, Salve was not himself that night. He was sailing in this reckless way in a mere fit of temper intensified by the consciousness of his own unreasonableness. Elizabeth made a mistake, he told himself by way of justification, if she thought that he on board his poor brig gave in to any officer in the navy, let him be who he might. She should see that he, too, was a man who could beat—he required no North Star under him, he would perform the same feat in a leaky old barge.



A couple of times when the cook, who looked after Elizabeth's wants, came up the cabin stairs, Salve inquired how she was getting on, and heard each time that she was sitting up not yet undressed. The last time the good-natured cook had added—

“She wants badly to see you, captain—she isn't accustomed to this sort of thing.”

He made no reply further than a scornful contraction of his features which was not visible to the other, and resumed his staggering walk to leeward, between the companion and the wheel.

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Elizabeth meanwhile had been sitting a prey to most distracted thoughts. When she went below with her child, she had a dull feeling at her heart that some great sorrow had come or was coming over her, and she had sat for some time almost without the power to think. He had never treated her like that before.

She set about putting the child to bed then in her usual way, as if she had been a mere machine. For him the rolling berth was only a rocking cradle, and he was soon sleeping quietly without an idea of danger. She stood with her arm leaning over the edge of the berth, supporting him, and gazing on his dimpled face; the lamp that swung to and fro under the beam, shedding a dim light over the narrow cabin, with its small table, and pegs full of seamen's clothes, moving solemnly backwards and forwards on the wall. Between the creaking of the ship's timbers and the noise of ropes being dragged across the deck, Salve's voice could be heard in harsh tones of command, and every now and then there would be a sudden concussion that would make the whole vessel shake, and the floor would seem to go from under her feet, so that she had to hold on by the rail of the berth, and keep the child from falling out as best she could at the same time. Whenever they had had such weather before, Salve had always come down from time to time to see her. Now—she didn't know what to think. From what the cook had told her, she gathered that they were beating with unjustifiable recklessness, and from the tone of Salve's voice she knew that he was in a savagely defiant mood, and that she, for some reason or other, was the cause of it. Her expression gradually changed to one of deeper and deeper anxiety of soul.

"But what have I done to him?" she exclaimed impetuously, and buried her face in the bedclothes.

"What have I done to him?" she repeated. "What can he believe?—what can he possibly think?" she asked herself, as she stood now like a statue almost, lost in conjecture, until the thought which she had always tried to keep away came up before her in full, heavy, unmistakable clearness.

"He doesn't trust me!" she whispered to herself, in despair. "He has no faith in me;" and she laid her head—her beautiful head—down upon her arm, just as her own child might have done, in an inconsolable fit of crying. But to her no tears would come, and she seemed to see an abyss of suspicion and distrust before her in which Salve's love for her was going to disappear.

She heard no longer the creaking and the noise on deck—no longer cared about the lurching and the thuds against the head-seas—although she had often to hold on to the berth with all her strength. All the energy of her soul was now occupied with this one awful terror which had taken possession of her. All her defiance was gone. Her only source of courage now was to do anything or everything to keep his love. She felt ready for any sacrifice whatever—ready, without a sigh, to bear the burden of his suspicions all her life through if she might only keep his love. It was she who had made

him distrustful, and it was upon her the punishment should fall, if she could not by persistent love bring him back to a healthy condition of mind again.

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Her instinct at once suggested to her how she should begin. He should see that she on her side had entire confidence in him—confidence as absolute as the child's there who was sleeping before her. And with a sickly smile upon her lips, she undressed and laid herself down beside little Gjert.

Upon deck Salve had wanted the night-glass, which was down in the cabin. The look-out man had fancied that he had caught a glimpse for a moment of a light, in which case, against Salve's calculations, they must be under Jutland. His pride, however, would not allow him to send any one else to fetch the glass, and he couldn't make up his mind to go down himself. At last it became absolutely necessary, and he went hurriedly down the stair.

When he opened the cabin door he stood still for a moment in surprise, and looked about him. He had expected to find Elizabeth sitting up, with the child on her lap, and looking frightened. In place of that all was quiet, and the lamp was nearly out. He strode on and took the glass from the wall; and after a couple of attempts, managed to light a match, in spite of the damp, and held it to the barometer. He remained then standing with it in his hand, and listened to hear whether she was asleep or not. Involuntarily he approached the berth, and looked into it.

"Elizabeth," he whispered, softly, as if he was afraid of waking her.

"Is that you, Salve?" was the reply, in a perfectly calm voice.

"I thought you would be sitting up with the boy in this gale. She rolls so; and I—I haven't been down to see you," he said.

"I knew I had you on deck, Salve," she replied. "The rest we must only leave to God. You have not had time to come down, poor fellow," she added, "you have been so busy."

"Elizabeth!" he exclaimed, with a sudden pang of passionate remorse, and reached over impetuously into the berth to embrace her with his wet clothes.

At that moment a crash was heard, accompanied by a violent trembling of the ship, and loud cries on deck. Something had evidently given way.

With the same movement with which he had intended to embrace her, he lifted her quickly out of the berth, and told her to dress herself and the child, and come up to the top of the cabin stairs. The words were hardly out of his mouth when the vessel heeled over, and didn't right herself again.

"Fore-topmast gone, captain; rigging hanging!" bawled Nils Buvaagen down the stair.



Salve turned to her for a moment with a face full of mute, crushing self-reproach, and sprang up on deck.

“Keep her away, if she’ll answer her helm!” he shouted to the man at the wheel. “To the axes, men!”



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The brig lay over on one side, with her brittle rigging at the mercy of the wind and sea, the waves making a clean breach over her. Salve himself went up and cut away the topmast, which went over the side to leeward; and as the first grey light of dawn appeared, and made the figures of the crew dimly distinguishable, the axes were still being feverishly plied in strong hands among the stays, backstays, and topmast rigging. While the work was going on the fearful rolling caused first the main-topgallant sail to go, and then the topsail, with the yards and all belonging to it. The forestay snapped, the mainsail split, and the lower yards and foremast were damaged. And when at last, after desperate efforts, they had succeeded in freeing the ship from the encumbrance of the fallen rigging, she lay there more than half a wreck, and scarcely capable of doing more than run before the wind.

They had only the boom-mainsail now, and the forecourse, left; and with these Salve kept her away—it was the only thing now to be done—until the growing light should show them whether they had sea-room, or the dreaded Jutland coast before them. The last, with this westerly gale blowing, would mean pretty nearly for a certainty stranding upon the sandbanks and the vessel becoming a wreck.

When it was clear day, they made out Horn's Reef far down to the south-east; they lay about off Ringkjøbing's Fjord, and would require now to do their utmost to clear the coast. With some difficulty they succeeded in rigging up a jury-mast, and managed by that means to keep up a little closer in the wind. But their only chance was that the wind might go down, or shift a little to the southward, or in the current, which generally takes a northerly direction here, unless it should set them in too much under land.

Salve paced restlessly up and down his dismantled deck, where a great part of the bulwarks and the round-house forward were stove in, whilst the crew relieved each other two and two at the pumps. They had evidently sprung a serious leak, which was the more cause for anxiety that they were returning in ballast, and had no timber cargo to keep them afloat. He had confided their situation to Elizabeth.

"I am afraid we may be obliged to beach her at some convenient spot," he said, adding, with a slight quiver in his voice, "we shall lose the brig."

He laid emphasis upon this, because he didn't wish to tell her the worst—namely, that this convenient spot was not to be found upon the whole coast, and that their lives were unmistakably in danger.

Whatever happened, it seemed sufficient for Elizabeth that he was near her, and there was a look of quiet trust in her face as she turned towards him that went to his heart; he could not bear it, and turned away.

The brig and its possible loss did not occupy much of Elizabeth's thoughts. In the midst of their danger she was absolutely glad at heart at the thought that by her display of

implicit confidence she had succeeded in winning a great victory with Salve. After what she had gone through that night, this was everything to her.



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There was a fine energetic look of determination in her face, and her eyes were moist with tears as she bent over the child in her lap and whispered—

“If he cannot trust us, we two must teach him—mustn’t we, Gjert?”

CHAPTER XXIII.

Towards dinner-time Salve and Nils Buvaagen were standing for a moment together by the ship’s side.

The storm had perceptibly lulled, but the weather was still dull and hazy, and the sea high. Two or three sea-gulls were circling drearily between them and the coast, where they could now see a long line of yellow foaming breakers like a huge wall, rising and falling on the sandbanks, with here and there a mast-high jet of spray from some reef outside. Although the wind was on shore they could hear the dull thunder of the breakers there, and a kind of dim rumbling in the air. The next three or four hours would obviously decide their fate.

Neither spoke; each was occupied with his own reflections. Nils was thinking of his wife and children at home, and Salve of his future. It was hard to lose the brig; he had worked hard for the money she represented, and he would have now to begin again on the lowest step of the ladder—if he escaped with his life, that was to say.

Less selfish thoughts succeeded then, and he turned to Nils.

“What I feel most in this business, Nils,” he said, earnestly, “is the thought that you or any of the others may perhaps pay the penalty for my mad sailing last night, with your lives. The brig is my own affair.”

“Oh, it will be all right, captain, you’ll see,” replied Nils, cheerfully. “If we can hang on to the old craft while she bumps over the banks, we shall manage somehow or other inside I expect.”

“God grant it!” said Salve, and turned away.

Nils remained standing where he was for a moment, and something like a spasm passed across his heavy features. He believed their situation to be desperate, and the vision of his home again rose before him, and almost choked him.

“Relieve the pumps!” was heard. It was his turn again, and he gave himself unweariedly to the work.

Salve seemed like one conscience-smitten. His face wore an expression of strained uneasiness, and his look more and more, as the moments passed, betokened the



consciousness that a struggle for life was before them. Through the glass a knot of people could be seen gathering on the downs which ran along the coast, with their jagged formations showing out in tones of dim violet and blue.

He stood now in the companion with his wife and his child, and sighed heavily as he looked at them.

“I would gladly give the brig, and be reduced to my own two hands once more, to have last night over again, Elizabeth!” he said.

She pressed his hand with an expression of sympathy, which answered him better than words; and the next moment he was again the practical man, showing her how she might tie the child to her breast with a handkerchief.



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"I can't stay with you any longer now," he said. "I am responsible for the lives of all on board, and must do my duty by them."

"Do your duty, Salve," she said.

"And so," he concluded, as, trying to conceal his emotion, he stroked her forehead and then the child's, "you must keep a good heart. When the pinch comes I shall be at your side, and we shall win through it, you'll see."

"With God's gracious help!" she answered; "remember that, Salve."

He strode away then down the deck and called the crew aft to take counsel with him on the situation. The vessel was rapidly becoming water-logged.

"Listen, my lads!" he said; "this is a serious business, as you can all very clearly see. But if we only have stout hearts we may get out of it yet, at all events with our lives. We have about three hours still before we run upon the sandbanks; but by that time it will have begun to get dark, and it may be difficult for the people on shore to come to our rescue. We must steer straight in and choose the likeliest place ourselves; and if you are of the same way of thinking we'll head for the shore now at once, rather than wait to have the old craft flung over the banks in the dark like a dead fish."

The crew were silent, and looked anxiously over towards the land. But when Nils Buvaagen declared himself a supporter of the captain's plan by crossing over the deck to him, all the others followed.

Salve went himself to the wheel, and gave the order to "Ease off the sheet."

"Ease it is," was the answer; and that was the last order ever given on board the Apollo.

Running now before the wind, they rapidly approached the land. Salve stood at the wheel, resting his knee from time to time on one of the spokes, with a concentrated look on his dark keen face, and his eye searching like a kite's along the coast for the place they were to make for. A couple of times he took up the glass and directed it towards the downs, where a group of people were moving about.

The chalk-white wall of water, rising and falling, grew higher and higher as they approached it; the noise and the dull roar of the breakers became more and more deafening, and a feeling of faintness crept over Elizabeth as she looked towards the land, and began to realise their danger.

The suspense was so painfully prolonged, a mist was coming before her eyes, so that she could scarcely see Salve over at the wheel; and she tried, in her terror, to keep them fixed upon the child in her arms. The seething, hissing sound in the air around her kept increasing, and made her giddy; a confusion of wild sounds, that grew louder and



ever louder, seemed to fill her brain; and before her eyes there was nothing but a whirl of scudding flakes of white. A mass of sand-laden foaming water appeared then suddenly to rise before her with a towering crest; she heard one loud cry of terror from different voices; the brig seemed lifted high in the air; the mainmast tottered; and a suffocating deluge of water came crashing down upon her, nearly carrying her with it down the cabin stairs, where she was clinging. Again and again it came, and her one thought now was to hold fast.



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When she returned to consciousness again, Salve was by her side. They were fastened to the same rope, and all the crew had come aft, and lashed themselves there. The brig lay over on her side upon the inner bank, with her stern up, and with the mainmast lying over the side. She kept lifting and striking heavily against the bottom, while heavy seas, one after another, swept her forward.

“The rigging to leeward must be cleared away, and we shall get off, lads!” shouted Salve, through his hollowed hand; and he sprang over with an axe to do it. Nils Buvaagen came to his assistance, and Elizabeth, in intense anxiety, watched the two men while they cut away rope after rope, holding on by the rigging all the time, the sea breaking over them, so that sometimes they were hardly visible through the drench of water. After one last stroke, which freed them from the mast, Salve was by her side again.

The next moment they were carried over the bank by the yellow churning surge, and with a succession of jerks and bumps, over to the shoal inside, where the bow-timbers were stove in—“the best thing that could have happened to them,” Salve said, coolly, “as it would relieve the vessel of the weight of water in the hold, and they might now be washed up nearer to the beach.”

At length, after a couple of long and terrible hours, as twilight was coming on, and the face of the downs was becoming darker in the gloomy atmosphere, it seemed as if the vessel had finally settled. The waves now broke less frequently over her, but left a heavy deposit of sand upon the deck when they did break. It seemed likely that she would go to pieces, plank by plank, if they remained as they were through the night, or else perhaps they would be buried in sand.

On one side of the shoal—on the side where they saw people upon the beach—ran a channel with a strong current; and they, perceived that they had been fortunate to some extent in not having been washed right over into it, as in that case the brig must inevitably have sunk: on the other side there was navigable water, though with breakers here and there. Their signals, they knew, had been seen by the people on shore; but, to their despair, they saw them all at once disappear.

Salve, upon that, set to work to lash some planks together for a raft; and the crew followed his example with whatever they could lay their hands upon that would float. His idea was, to try and get Elizabeth and the child to land by tying them securely to the raft, and trust to his own swimming powers and address to reach the shore with the line he was attaching to it; and the only question then would be, whether he would be able to haul it to land against the strong back-suck of the receding waves, that left every time a long stretch of dry sand behind them. Elizabeth was sitting meanwhile on the cabin-stairs, scarcely in a condition to comprehend what was passing.



As Salve was occupied with this work, he suddenly heard a shout of joy round him. From behind a projection in the downs a group of men had appeared, carrying a large boat. They stopped at a corner of the beach. A number of them took their seats in the boat; and as a wave was curling over to break, the others ran her down, and the back flow carried her out to sea, the men setting to work at once with all their might at the oars.



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The plucky fellows evidently knew the water thereabouts; for they steered in a wide circle up behind a line of shoals, that acted like a mole in breaking the force of the waves, and bore down then obliquely upon the wreck, to leeward of which the water was comparatively smooth.

“Now then, look alive, my hearties!” they shouted, as they hooked on; and the admonition was scarcely needed.

Salve carried his almost unconscious wife down to the side, where they took her and laid her aft in the bottom of the boat; but she sat up with outstretched arms until her child had been passed to her from hand to hand, and was safe in them again, and then she watched anxiously for Salve to come too. He sprang down into the boat the last, and then she fainted.

They put off, and stood in now on the crests of the waves straight for the beach, where a score of men in sea-boots and woollen jackets made a chain down into the water by holding each other's hands, and drew the boat ashore.

They heard congratulations all round; and the man who had held the tiller exclaimed, as Salve silently grasped his hand—

“It was resolutely done, Northman, to steer like that—only that you did, you'd have passed the night upon the bank.”

The invitation of their rescuers to partake of such hospitality as they could offer was gladly accepted by the famished party from the wreck; and they followed the steersman, Ib Mathisen, and his comrades in among the downs, where the wind was no longer felt. It was some miles to the fishing village; and they trudged on after it grew dark in silence, being too exhausted, and too dejected, to talk, their guides only keeping up a low conversation among themselves. Salve carried the child, sheltering it from the pricking sand that blew in their faces when they came out upon the flat downs farther on, and supporting Elizabeth at the same time.

At last they saw the lights of a group of cottages. The largest of these belonged to Ib Mathisen; and into this Salve and his wife were conducted, while the crew were distributed among the others.

Ib's wife, a robust-looking woman of fifty or thereabouts, with a bold, straightforward expression in her tanned countenance, was standing over by the fire with her sleeves tucked up baking, when they came in. She examined the incomers steadily for a moment without raising herself from her stooping position; but at the sight of Elizabeth and the child she exclaimed in a tone of compassion that was better than any more formal welcome, “The poor woman and her child have been cast ashore, Ib?” and set about caring for their wants at once, her grown-up daughter helping her to draw a bench



to the fire for them, and putting a kettle on to make something warm for them to drink. This was evidently not her first experience of the kind; and before long they had all put on dry clothes, and Elizabeth and the child were in a warm bed. As she went about she put questions in a low voice to her husband; and Salve, who was sitting with his cheek in his hand staring into the fire, heard her say—



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“Perhaps he was the owner of the vessel himself?”

“Yes, she was all the property we possessed,” Salve answered, quietly. “But we are none the less grateful to your husband for rescuing us, and we have unfortunately very little to thank him with for venturing his life out on the banks in such weather.”

“So you’ve been at that game again, Ib,” said the wife, turning to her husband reproachfully, but not seeming altogether sincere in her reproach.

Turning to Salve then she said a little curtly, “For the like of that we take no payment,” adding in a milder tone, “We have two sons ourselves who ply to Norway—there’s a bad coast there too.”

Salve was pale and worn out with over-exertion, and after taking a mouthful of food he lay down to rest. But he could not sleep, and towards morning he was lying awake listening to the dull booming of the distant sea. Elizabeth was tossing about feverishly and talking in her sleep. Her brain was evidently busy with the terrors of the previous night, and from occasional words it seemed as if he had a share in her thoughts. He lay and listened, though there was not much to be made out of her disjointed utterances. She grew more restless, and began to talk more excitedly—

“Never! never!” she said, vehemently; “he shall never hear a word about the brig,” and she went on then in a confidential whisper—

“Shall he, Gjert? He shall find us in our berth, or else he will think we are afraid.”

Salve kissed her forehead tenderly, but with a sigh. There had been a motive then, after all, at the bottom of that display of confidence which had occasioned him such pangs of self-reproach.

A couple of hours after he was on the way down to the sea to look at the brig. The general aspect of the world about him was in harmony with his mood. The wind whistled over the dreary sand-hills, whirling the sand in clouds in among the downs that stretched away like a storm-tossed sea into the distance, in every variety of desolate and jagged outline. Upon the melancholy shore a sea-gull or two were circling round some old black stumps of wreck that protruded from the sand; while beyond lay the dismal expanse of the western sea, without a sail upon its leaden waste of waters, so shunned by all. Dreariness, wreck, and desolation were on every side; and it seemed to Salve that it was only a reflection of his own life. He had got to be the owner of a brig, and there it lay, what remained of it, buried in the sand. He had succeeded in making Elizabeth his own, but had he thereby added anything to the happiness of his life?

He stood gazing at the remains of his brig, over which the yellow waves were breaking, in a state of gloomy abstraction, from which he was only aroused by the approach of Ib



Mathisen and a party of his own crew, who had followed him to the shore to see if possibly they might retrieve some of their property. He joined them in the search, and with but small result; three ship chests and the compass being all the reward of an hour's labour among the timber-ends and bolts and pieces of rigging that strewed the beach, or made ripples in the sand for a long distance in either direction.



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They remained that day in the fishing hamlet; and when Salve had made his declaration before the authorities, and had paid the crew what he owed them with the greater part of the money he had saved, he and Elizabeth took passage for Christiansand in a corn ship from Harboere.

He was very silent on the way, thinking about his future; and the prospect was not a bright one: he knew that there prevailed but one opinion among the crew about the loss of the brig, that he had his own folly only to thank for it; and as this, of course, would get about, his chance of being employed as a skipper by any shipowner would be very small. Elizabeth's popularity in Tonsberg might probably be of service to him, but he would sooner starve than help himself to a situation by means of it; and in her present circumstances she should not even return to Tonsberg.

One only course remained open to him if he was not to begin again from the very beginning—he would become an uncertificated pilot for the Arendal district. No one knew the coast there better than he did; he had always had the idea in his mind, ever since the night when he brought the Juno into Merdoe; and out there, or in some other spot along the coast, he reflected gloomily that he could have Elizabeth all to himself.

When he announced his decision to Elizabeth, she entered with animation into the project; and when he went on to add, that she would have to be content now with being only a common man's wife, she replied, intrepidly—

“If he is only called Salve Kristiansen, I require nothing more.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was so arranged then; and though Elizabeth was rather disappointed to hear that she was not to see her tidy house at Tonsberg again, she allowed no indication of the feeling to escape her, and Salve went by himself to arrange their affairs there.

When he had sold what property they had, and bought his pilot-boat, they had still a small sum left with which to begin housekeeping afresh, and Merdoe was chosen for their future residence.

From the outside this island looks only like one of the desolate series which form the outworks of the coast for miles here in either direction, with many a spot of angry white marking the sunken rocks between. But the inner side forms the well-known Merdoe harbour of refuge, with its little hamlet of fishermen's and pilots' houses on the strand; and it was in one of these, a little red painted house with a small porch in front and a flagged yard and garden behind, and which presently became their own, that they eventually settled.



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The coast outside Merdoe is exceptionally dangerous, but the Merdoe pilots have also the reputation of being exceptionally brave and skilful. They are also perhaps the widest known. For having no defined district they take a wide range, and may to-day be lying off Lindesnaes, to-morrow under the Skaw or the Holmen, and the day after board a ship from Hamburg right away down at Horn's Reef. It is a common thing to meet one of them with his Arendal mark, his red stripe and number on the mainsail, trawling for mackerel far out over the North Sea, and even down as far as the Dogger Bank, where they get information from foreign fishing smacks of vessels from the Channel or from English or Dutch ports. If a skipper wants news from the North Sea or Skager Rack, he generally keeps a look-out for one of these pilot-boats, and finds a living shipping list, and the newest too, on board, which costs him, at the most, supposing he has nothing of interest to impart in return, a roll of tobacco, a bottle of spirits, or a strand of rope. But it is to the captain who, on some pitch-dark winter night, when the sea is running mountains high, has come in beneath bare poles under the Torungens, and who knows that he is doomed if he cannot get a pilot, that these Merdoe men are most familiar. When, perhaps, he has given up all hope, he suddenly hears himself hailed from the darkness; a line is thrown; and a dripping pilot stands upon the deck. When the sea is too rough to board a vessel in any other way, they do not think twice about taking a line round their waist and jumping overboard; and when it is a point of honour with them to bring in a ship, boat and home and life weigh but very little in the opposite scale.

The black-bearded Salve Kristiansen soon came to be the best known in Arendal of them all. The dauntless look in his keen brown eyes, his sharp features, and his short, sudden manner and way of speaking, gave the impression of a character of uncommon energy; and it was said that not the very wildest weather would deter him from going to sea. He was known to have more than once stayed alone on board a water-logged vessel while he sent his comrade on shore for help; and in his little room at home, with its white-painted windows, and geraniums, and Dutch cuckoo-clock, there stood above the roll of charts and telescope on the wall a bracket with more than one silver goblet upon it, which, like the telescope, were presents in acknowledgment of his services in piloting vessels into port under circumstances of unusual difficulty and danger. But, notwithstanding the repute in which he was held, he had never yet received the medal for saving life, nor had he yet been made a certificated pilot of the district.

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He was not a man who gathered comrades round him; and as the years passed, his unapproachability of demeanour, which seemed intended to convey to people with a certain bitterness that he could do very well without them, increased. It was said up in the town that he had taken to drink. For after selling off his mackerel down on the quay, he would often now sit the whole day in Mother Andersen's parlour with his brandy-glass before him; and when evening approached, and his head had had as much as it could carry, it was just as well to keep out of his way. He did not talk much; and what attraction he found in Mother Andersen's parlour it was not easy to say. But they knew, at all events, how to treat him there; and he felt, from the casual questions that would be addressed to him after he had returned from sea, or from the way in which a newcomer would salute him, that he was in a sympathetic atmosphere, and that his name was in repute. It was even something more than respect, perhaps, which he inspired, for a sailor would think twice before sitting down beside him, unless it came natural to him to do so from the way in which they had greeted or spoken to one other.

It was not, however, any attraction which he found in Mother Andersen's parlour which made him spend so much of his time there; it was that he was afraid of his own temper at home.

When he had first set up on his own account, and had had his appointment as a duly certificated pilot for the object of his ambition, he had never made it his habit to stay in Arendal when he returned from sea instead of going home. But some two or three years after he had settled out at Merdoe, a couple of incidents had occurred which made a new starting-point, as it were, in his domestic life. They were the nomination of Captain Beck, who was now a wealthy man, to the post of master of the pilots of the district, and who, as such, became his superior; and the arrival of Carl Beck to live in Arendal and superintend his father's shipbuilding yard, for which purpose he had retired from the navy. Since the arrival of the Becks he had become more and more difficult to get on with; and Elizabeth's secret, self-denying struggle grew proportionately harder. Whenever she returned from a shopping expedition to Arendal, or from seeing her aunt, she would be sure to find him in an irritable humour, which would generally vent itself in contemptuous remarks upon old Beck's incapacity for the post he held; and at last, much as she longed to get a glimpse now and then of something different from the monotony of her daily life out on Merdoe, she gave up going altogether.



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Her patience and self-suppression had had the effect, as years went on, of making a tyrant of her husband. When in one of his dark moods now, he would not tolerate the slightest contradiction from her or from any one in the house, and all she could do was to be quietly cheerful and affectionate, and to try her best to avoid falling into any of the traps which he would lay to catch her, and to make her, by some chance word or other, or even by a slightly displeased or resigned expression, give his bad humour an excuse for breaking out. She had to weigh every word she uttered, and to take the most roundabout methods of avoiding his sensitiveness, and after all, she would perhaps commit herself when she least expected it; upon which a scene would immediately ensue, that would be all the more unpleasant from his never expressing himself directly. Sometimes Salve was really desperate, and would terrify her with all kinds of threats, not against her, but against himself—and she knew he was just the man to carry them out. It had often happened that for some unlucky word of hers he had gone to sea again an hour after coming home; and once in such weather that she had not the faintest hope of ever seeing him return.

She would sit at home and weep for hours together, striving to repress the angry feelings of resentment which would rise from time to time when she thought how little return she received for all she gave; how less than little her happiness was considered; and how meagre a reward for all she had to endure were the two or three days perhaps of occasional happy calm and sunshine in her home, when she seemed to have him with her as he had been in the first early days of their married life, and when he would find it as hard to tear himself away from his home again as she knew he had often found it to return. What a heart he had in reality! She alone knew that—the others judged him only by his hard and harsh exterior. And how proud she was of him when she heard the others talking of the daring things he had done, and saw how they all looked up to him! But it was not enough. And in the dulness and loneliness of her life out there on Merdoe, she enjoyed to the full, during these many weary years, her woman's privilege of suffering for the man she loved. But it was not to be so always. Brighter days—little as she now expected them—were still in store for her.

CHAPTER XXV.

We may leave for a moment the contemplation of a domestic history lighted up at present by such few and fitful gleams of sunshine, and glance at the married life of another pair who have figured in this story, and who have not been without their influence upon whatever there may have been of tragic in its development.



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The young Becks, as they were called in contradistinction to the master's family, were now among the first people in Arendal, and kept one of the best houses in the town, which they had ample means to do, for the shipbuilding business brought them in a considerable annual income. Carl Beck had lost none of his attractiveness as he grew older. His curling black hair had now an early sprinkling of grey in it, but was always arranged to the very best effect; and there was, people said, such a nobleness about him (his cleverness was undisputed) that when he rose to propose or reply to a toast, there was not a lady at the table who was not in a flutter of inward admiration. With his social advantages he could not, of course, fail to be in a position of considerable influence in the town, which again heightened his welcome in society.

But if he was thus made much of, it was not altogether the same with his wife. The estimate of her which generally prevailed, that she was so perfectly "correct," was not intended perhaps to be complimentary, but implied at the same time a recognition of her social power. She was, in fact, her husband's timepiece, and without her tact he would not have kept himself as straight as he did in the midst of the gushing welcomes which he found on all sides.

In his relations with his wife he was a pink of chivalry, never omitted the most trifling attention, and was always being complimented on being a pattern husband. Some few of the intimates of the house seemed to think, though, that there was something strange in their attitude to one another—a sort of coolness and reserve about both—and it was whispered that his wife did not appreciate him as she ought; it seemed as if the two talked together best when strangers were present. Fru Beck, too, always looked so uncommonly pale, and was so frigidly calm, that it might have been supposed she had no feelings at all; and in comparison with his overflowing warmth of nature she certainly did seem dreadfully precise and cold.

When they first came to Frederiksvaern as a young newly-married couple, her colour had been fresh, and her expression showed that she was still in love; she was then completely under the spell of his attractive warmth of manner, and felt safe in the possession of his love. It was true, a couple of failings, which contrasted strangely with the idea she had formed of him from his manly bearing, had gradually disclosed themselves—namely, an extraordinary vanity, and an almost ridiculous dependence upon the opinion of the world. But so long as his heart was in the right place, and she could feel that he loved her, these disappointments were matters of but secondary consideration to her. She felt that she even loved him all the more for these weaknesses; and she trusted to the power which she was gaining over him more and more every day to get them presently corrected.



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The charming Lieutenant Beck became sought after everywhere, and his success with the ladies resulted in his having very soon established sentimental relations with nearly every member of the fair circle around him. He nearly always had a flower in his buttonhole when he came home, which had been jokingly given to him as a *gage d'amour* by some one or other of his admirers; he received presents from all sides; and they, in fact, laid a sort of embargo upon him as an object of general admiration.

There was nothing to say against all this—far from it; but the only person who felt left out in the cold was his own wife, who seemed to see this enthusiastic crowd gradually establishing, as it were, a prescriptive right of way between herself and her husband, and treading under foot the very flowers that should have grown only for their own two selves in the intimacy of their home. She became gradually a less animated, but was still, he thought, an interested listener, when he came home after being in the society of his lady friends, and recounted his triumphs. If this was so, she at all events began to be more particular about her own dress and appearance, and set to work now to systematically cultivate the social talent which she naturally possessed. She determined to conquer her rivals, who had the advantage of her in appearance, but were inferior to her in talent; and she succeeded. But she became naturally an object for their criticism in consequence.

The only one with whom she did not succeed was her husband. His self-love was far too much taken up with the small flatteries of all kinds, and the homage of which he was the object, to have any eyes for the very great compliment indeed which was being paid to him by his wife in the line which she had adopted. To her he was married, and therefore of her he was always sure enough.

It was from that time that she dated the influence which she usually acquired in the social circles she frequented, and which her husband's position and circumstances made it easy for her to maintain when they changed their residence to Arendal.

But those first years of their married life had not passed without a serious, and to her completely decisive, *eclaircissement*. It was occasioned by his relations with the wife of an officer of rank, which had become really more intimate than her pride could stand, although she knew very well that on her husband's side it was only a sort of mixture of vanity and policy that prompted his affectation of devotion. She had treated the lady with marked coldness at a party where they had met, and her husband had taken her to task for it when they got home.

Entirely wrapped up in himself as he was, it had never occurred to him that his wife could have any cause of complaint against him, and what she had been going through had been altogether lost upon him. She did not say much now in reply to his reproaches—she merely stood and looked at him in a way that made him feel rather uncomfortable, and then quietly left the room. He could hear her going with slow steps up the stairs.



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An hour or so after, she came down again into the room with a light in her hand. Her expression was cold, and she did not look at him as she set about putting the room to rights for the night as usual. He tried to pacify her, begged her not to take what he had said so much to heart, and was going to put his arm affectionately round her waist, but was stopped on finding himself suddenly confronted by the deadly pale face and flashing eyes of an infuriated woman.

The time had come to speak out, and she did speak out; and Lieutenant Beck heard what he would have been very sorry to repeat to his best friend. For he felt in his heart that it was nothing but the truth, however soon he might forget it again.

She called him a pitiful wretch, who would sell her and everything they jointly prized to the first comer for a little miserable flattery. He had distributed himself to that extent among his giddy acquaintance, she went on, with a movement as if she thrust from her something she utterly despised, that there was nothing left of him for a woman with a vestige of truth or honour to pick up.

When her husband threw himself upon the sofa, and exclaimed in a sentimental tone that he was a miserable man, she repeated the last word twice in an inexpressibly contemptuous tone—

“A man!—a man!—if you had been a man, you would still have had my love—at all events a remnant of it; but now, like this light here,”—and she puffed it out,—“all is extinguished between us.”

With that she left the room.

Beck sat where he was, overwhelmed and stupefied at this sudden blow which had fallen upon his domestic happiness, and with a horrible apprehension that she might have meant what she said in real earnest.

She sat in the room with her child the whole night, and he knew that he dared not disturb her.

Notwithstanding the struggle which it cost his pride, he was almost humble in his manner towards her for some days after, and warmly and cordially acknowledged that he had been in the wrong. He even tried to show her that he was in earnest by assuming for a while an altered attitude towards the ladies, and actually succeeded so far that she appeared to have forgotten that anything had occurred between them, and was just the same in her intercourse with him as before—quietly friendly that is to say, as she had been of recent years.

It never came to any real reconciliation on her side. She had seen too clearly that his nature was only that of a drifting cloud, glowing for the moment just as it was played



upon by popular applause; and he was too profoundly selfish for any real earnest love to find a root in his composition, much less to give promise of a common life-growth. With his feeling and good-nature he would have treated any wife well, even if she had not made herself so necessary to him as she was; her social talent, she felt, was her great safety—it made him look up to her; and his



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vain nature required that she should be something to be proud of: but she was forced to acknowledge in her own heart with despair that she had been blinded by her love for him, that his nature was absolutely deficient in constancy and truth, and in every quality which she had once persuaded herself to see in him. She knew the secret about this man, so brilliant before the eyes of the world—that he was not a man. He lived and moved before her now like a defaced ideal, to which she was tied—to the end of her life. The bitterness of disappointment rankled in her mind, and was all the more poignant that she had to keep it shut up within herself and had no one to confide in. Her life had become a desert, and at the very moment when her husband would be making a brilliant little speech that called forth applause all round the table, she would seem to hear nothing but a rattle of emptiness. She always protested to her parents, when they could not understand why she looked so pale, that she was perfectly happy; and they had no reason to think otherwise, for she seemed to be well cared for in every respect. The only real interest which she possessed now in life was her son Frederick; but she brought him up with the utmost possible strictness, for she fancied she detected his father's nature over again in him.

She had always retained her warm interest in Elizabeth, and the messages which she had received from her from time to time had always given her pleasure. She had never felt so attracted towards any one since as she had been to that girl; and now after her great disappointment, Elizabeth's features, so full of character and expression, were constantly before her. She had seen her sometimes in Arendal, and thought she knew the reason why Elizabeth always seemed to avoid meeting her; for she had found once, by chance, among some old letters in one of her husband's drawers, the note which Elizabeth had written to him.

It had been no shock to her. By that time she had come to know his volatile nature, and had given up all hope of ever being more to him than another would be.

On the occasions when she had caught a glimpse of the pilot's wife in the street, she had looked searchingly into her face to try and satisfy herself whether she looked happy. But she had not been able to do so; there seemed to be something on Elizabeth's mind. And taking this impression in connection with what she heard of the pilot, of his hardness and uncompanionable temper, she thought that it was clear enough that Elizabeth too, was unhappy in her married life, and longed to have a talk with her, to know whether she herself was not the more unhappy of the two.

Nor had Fru Beck's uncommon pallor escaped Elizabeth's notice, and she also longed to have a talk again with her friend of former days; but Beck's house was for many reasons impossible ground for her. As she was standing one day with Gjert on the quay, about to start for home, Fru Beck passed a little way off, leaning on her husband's arm, and looked back with an expression so sad, and with eyes that seemed to linger so

longingly, as if she had something she wanted to say, or to confide, that they nodded involuntarily to one another.



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Since then they had never met, for from that time Elizabeth had scarcely ever been in Arendal.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Gjert was now ten years old; and whilst his father was sitting over his glass in Mother Andersen's parlour, he used generally to amuse himself out in the harbour with a number of the Arendal boys with whom he had struck up an acquaintanceship, and who understood very little about differences of social position.

The brown-haired, brown-eyed little lad, with his sharp, intelligent face, was the wildest of them all, and enjoyed a certain consideration among them at the same time as his father's son—an honour which he evidently thought it incumbent upon him to maintain by every kind of break-neck exploit. His proper business, of course, was to look after his father's boat in his absence; but as it was safely moored, and could be seen just as well from any of the yards in the harbour, he used generally to wait in some such conspicuous position till his friends came streaming down to the quay from school, and throwing their books down, sailed out in some punt or other to join him. Most of the boys had been expressly warned by their mothers against the reckless Kristiansen's son, but cross-trees and mast-heads became thereby only the more attractive.

Old Beck's grandson, Frederick, who was going to be a naval cadet, had fancied one day that he would escape observation from the windows at home by climbing up to join his friend at the mast-head, on the other side of the mast; but the slender spar was not sufficient to protect him from the master-pilot's keen eye, and the latter came himself on board in full grandfatherly indignation against the skipper for allowing such pranks to be played on board his craft, thrashed Gjert for being the cause of his grandson's disobedience, and told him that it was very clear what he would come to some day—that he came of a bad stock, and took after it. His own little scion, although a couple of years older than Gjert, escaped punishment altogether—the other lads, however, determining among themselves that he should have it the next time they met. And he would have had it, if Gjert, who should have been the one more particularly to desire revenge, had not unexpectedly taken his part.

It was only as they were sailing the cutter home that the pilot heard how Beck had thrashed his son, and cast his horoscope. His smurched face grew white as a sheet. But when Gjert went in to tell him how, all the same, he had taken Frederick Beck's part, his father looked at him in surprise, and then muttered something about "telling this to his mother."

Elizabeth had seen the boat pass Merdoe for Arendal the day before, and she was sitting indoors now expecting her husband, having commissioned their youngest and only other son, Henrik, to keep a look-out, and come and tell her when he saw his father



coming. Henrik, however, had entirely forgotten her injunctions in the more interesting occupation of catching shrimps in one of the salt-water pools which a recent high tide had left among the rocks; and there, in the bright afternoon, over the blue and gold sea, dotted with sails, was the boat with its stripe and number already close by, standing straight in for the harbour with a flowing sheet.



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With all her deep love for her husband, Elizabeth always awaited his return now with a certain dread; and as she sat there by the window with her work, in her rather foreign, Dutch style of dress, with the rays of the evening sun streaming in upon her through the geraniums, she did not look a happy woman. She was pale, and from time to time leaned her cheek for a moment on her hand, and closed her eyes with a wearied look, and then went on again determinedly with her sewing. When she heard his voice unexpectedly outside the door, she jumped up hurriedly, but stopped then with a half-frightened look, hesitating whether to go out and meet him or not.

While she hesitated the door opened, and her expression changed at once to one of cheerfulness, and apparently glad surprise.

“Well, mother, how goes it?” he cried, as he entered, in a light and cheery tone, which took in a moment a weight off her heart; “and where is the ‘bagman’?”—a pet name he had for his youngest son, when he was in good humour.

Gjert’s adventure with Beck’s grandson had made him a different man to-day, and had immeasurably lightened for the time his wife’s task; but she was very careful not to let him see that she found him any different from usual. Still, as she helped him off with his pilot-coat he noticed that her hand trembled. His attention was diverted, however, at the moment by the appearance of Henrik in the doorway, looking very frightened and conscious, and with his trousers still tucked up over his bare legs, and with the tin cup, in which he had his shrimps, in his hand.

Gjert came in now with some of the things for the house which his father had bought in Arendal, and impressing the doleful-looking “bagman” into the service, took him down with him to the boat to help him to bring up the rest. He had only given his mother a hurried kiss, as he had seen at a glance that all was right this time. When it was otherwise, he always kept by her, and, in look and manner, gave her all the help he could. He had seen from his childhood, and comprehended so much of the unhappiness of her relations with his father, that he had constituted himself her friend and support, although, at the same time, he was devoted to his father. When Gjert was in the boat, Elizabeth had a sort of security that Salve would at all events not be absolutely reckless; and Gjert always took care that she should have news of them by other pilots or fishermen from Merdoe, from the different places they put in to. If the boy was not with his father she would sometimes send him in to Arendal to look for him.

This time the pilot made a long stay at home, and during the whole time not a single domestic jar occurred. For a couple, indeed, who had been married as long as they had, such unbroken harmony would, under any circumstances, have been remarkable. Little Henrik had even had his father as a companion on one of his shrimping expeditions; and much of Salve’s time had since been taken up in rigging a little brig for his delighted son.



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The only point upon which a harmless little difference occurred was the question of Gjert's schooling. They were very fairly well-to-do people for their position, and his mother had one day, as if the idea had suddenly occurred to her, asked why they should not send him to school in Arendal; he would be able to lodge with her aunt there, she said. His father, however, would not hear of it, and dismissed the subject very shortly by saying that when Gjert was old enough, he intended him to go to Tergesen's rigging-loft in Vraangen and learn to rig.

His mother could not, however, so easily dismiss the ambitious scheme from her mind, and it became, a few days after, the occasion of the most violent scene which had ever yet put her strength of purpose to the test, but from which there ensued eventually the very happiest results.

A man-of-war had lately come up to Arendal from a cadet cruise to the Mediterranean, and Gjert had been allowed to go over with one of the other pilots to see her.

Apart from the sensation which her lofty rig, the shining brass stoppers protruding from her gunports, her swarm of sailors, and the sound of the shrill whistle and occasional beat of drum on board, suggestive of man-of-war discipline, created, curiosity had been further excited by some rumours which were in circulation about her cruise having been a flogging cruise; and among Gjert's friends, and indeed among the harbour people generally, she was so much the object of awe, that whenever the whistle sounded, it would darkly suggest the thought that another flogging was going to take place, and any boats that were near at the moment would sheer off to a more comfortable distance. There was just so much truth in all this that there was one very hot-tempered officer on board who was very much hated by the crew, and who had been unfortunate enough to single out for flogging just the man whom, if he had been better advised, he would have left alone—the song-maker, namely, of the ship. The result had been that ever since a mystic refrain, sufficiently significant, however, had been sung at the capstan, and had found its way on shore, where it was in the mouth now of every boy about the harbour.

Gjert's curiosity about everything connected with the vessel was unbounded, and Frederick Beck, with whom he had established a close friendship since that little affair with the other's grandfather, when Gjert had saved him from punishment, could not tell him half enough. "Fancy," he thought, "to be able to go about in a uniform all covered with gold like the officers there on board!" He could think and talk of nothing else all the time they were sailing home next day.



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The wind had risen to half a gale, and they had three reefs in the mainsail. His father, who for some days past had been wandering with increasing frequency up to the flag-staff, or down to the quay, where he would stand with his hand behind his back alone, and look about him in an eager, restless way—sure signs that he was getting tired of being on land—had been up several times to look out for the boy, and was now sitting in the house, pasting together an old chart, as his son came up from the quay shouting out the new song at the top of his voice against the wind. He stopped in the porch to collect his breath to give the last stanza with effect, and husband and wife as they listened exchanged glances.

It was easy to see when he came in that he was bursting with the consciousness of having all sorts of wonderful things to relate. His mother had just laid the table for their evening meal, and as he greeted them in an off-hand sort of way, he drew a chair over to the table at the same time, that he might be ready to fall to the moment the food was set down.

“Well, Gjert,” said his mother, after he had sat and looked round him for a moment or two, evidently expecting to be invited to gratify their curiosity, “were you on board?”

“Not myself; but I talked to others who had been. For that matter I saw everything that was to be seen,” he assured them with a self-conscious nod, reaching over at the same time for a crust of bread—“from the topmast of the Antonia, a schooner that was lying close alongside. She barely reached up to the Eagle’s bulwarks; she would just about make a long-boat for her—”

“If she was a good deal smaller,” said his father, drily, completing the sentence for him, as he went over and placed the chart upon the top of the small cupboard in the corner.

Gjert began then, addressing himself to his mother, to support his assertion by a comparison of the height out of the water of the schooner’s hull and of the corvette’s, by assuring her that the vane at her mast-head had not reached higher than the man-of-war’s mainyard, &c., but he was interrupted by his father—

“What song was that you were singing out there?”

“Oh, it was the one about the flogging cruise.”

“It really was one then?” said the pilot, with a searching look at his son. He did not easily give credence to gossip of the kind.

To be addressed by his father in this interested tone was highly flattering to Gjert’s self-love. It was this, in fact, that he had been eager all the time to tell them about; and he burst out now with the deepest conviction in his manner—



“That it was, father! Some say six, others nine; but that they were all flogged within an inch of their lives and put in irons down in the Mediterranean is as certain as—as,” he looked about him eagerly here for something that should be duly emphatic, and when no other more striking illustration suggested itself, had to wind up finally with this rather lame one—“as that the cuckoo is standing up there on the clock.”



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The intelligence had the effect of bringing his mother to a seat, with the plate on her lap, while she looked apprehensively from her son to her husband. There was nothing, however, in the aspect of the latter to justify her apprehension.

“Who did you hear this from, Gjert?” she asked.

“Who did I hear it from? From everybody.”

But bethinking him then that in his incredulous home “everybody” would be reckoned about as valuable an authority as “nobody,” he continued—

“From Frederick Beck. He had talked himself with one of the sailors who was in charge of the officers’ gig down by the landing-stairs while his chief was on shore; and that wasn’t all he heard, but a lot of other queer things besides.” Here he looked round him evidently with a satisfied feeling that he must have convinced them this time at any rate.

“He seems to have been a credible kind of a chap, that sailor,” observed his father with a mild irony, which escaped his son, however; while his mother looked at him in some anxiety lest he should be going to sit there and make a fool of himself. “Well, and what further did he tell him?”

“Oh, lots of things.”

“Let us have them.”

“He said they had had such a hurricane down there, that they came across a whole town that had been blown away drifting out in the middle of the sea, with a minister praying in the midst of it;—then, that they had run so close in to the land in beating up the Straits of Gibraltar, that they had taken a palm-tree on board on the end of the bowsprit with a whole family of negroes sitting in it, whom they had afterwards to put ashore.”

Gjert would have delivered himself of still another curious incident if he had not been brought up by the laughter of his parents. The “bagman” too, was laughing, because he saw the others doing so, and received a crushing look accordingly from Gjert, who drew in his horns at once.

“Perhaps you don’t think it’s true?”

“Do you know what it is to spin a yarn, my boy? That lad down in the gig has been spinning you a fine one,” said his father, as he sat down to the table.

Gjert continued to talk all through the meal, and when it was over, while his mother came in and out of the room, and his father sat over at the window, partly listening and partly looking out at the weather. He described everything he had seen with such life



and vividness, particularly all that concerned the officers and the cadets, that his mother sat down to listen, and his father, when there was a moment's pause, observed with a quiet laugh—

“I daresay you would have liked to have been one of the cadets yourself, Gjert?”

“Yes,” said his mother, beguiled for a moment by the dazzling thought. “If he were only to go to school in Arendal no one knows what might happen. The clerk says that nothing is any trouble to Gjert.”

Something in this observation must have struck discordantly upon her husband's ear, for he changed colour and replied shortly after, somewhat sarcastically—



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“It’s my opinion that Gjert is not too good for his father’s station, and that we are not going to make interest with anybody to hoist him up into the company of his betters, as they call themselves.”

Gjert’s previous animation had been very much heightened by the picture which such a glittering prospect presented to his fancy, and he cried now, without taking warning by his father’s changed tone—

“Mother was saying, though, the other day, that if I were to be a cadet I should cut a better figure in the world than as an ordinary common sailor.”

It was as if a match had been thrown into a gunpowder-magazine. His father’s hard face flushed up wildly, and he threw over at his wife a look of inexpressible, cold scorn. Turning savagely away, he said in a cutting tone, that seemed to go through her—

“Do you also despise your father’s station, my boy?”

When Gjert blundered out then in his eagerness—

“Frederick Beck is going to be a cadet,” it was followed simply by—

“Come here, Gjert!”—and he received a blow that sent him staggering against the table. A second was about to follow, when his father happened to look up at his wife. She had sprung a couple of steps forward, as if to take Gjert from him, and was standing now before him with crimson face and flashing eyes, and with a bearing that made him, at all events, lower his hand. She then turned away at once, and went out into the kitchen.

Salve stood for a moment uncertain how to act. Then he went to the kitchen door, and announced, shortly and sharply, that he and Gjert were going to sea that evening—they would want provisions.

The wind and rain beat wildly against the black window-panes while Elizabeth was carrying out his orders; but when she presently came in with the ale-jar and what else they were to take with them, not a trace of anxiety, or of her former emotion, was to be detected. Her face was pale, and stony-calm; and there was something almost humble in her bearing towards her husband. But when, for a moment, she and Gjert were left alone together in the house, drawing him hastily towards her, she whispered, in a voice choked with repressed emotion—

“Never let your father see that you are afraid, my boy.”

She bade her husband farewell at the door; and there was foul weather both within and without the pilot as he put to sea that evening.



CHAPTER XXVII.

Elizabeth was more agitated even than usual after a scene of this kind. When he had struck her son, her indignation had almost mastered her; and it frightened her now to think how near she had been to an explosion. This time the so-often-repeated excuses which she had accustomed herself to make for him would not suggest themselves; and as she lay awake in the stillness of the night, and looked back through the years that were gone, it seemed as if she was struggling and labouring on for ever without any prospect of getting nearer to the goal, and that her patience was wellnigh exhausted. Had she no claim at all to consideration? or must she be for ever silent like this, till one of them should at last be laid in Tromoe churchyard?



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These thoughts, having been once roused, would not be repressed again. They held possession of her during the following day too; and she could settle down to no work of any kind. She dreaded that Salve might unexpectedly return, and did not know how she should receive him,—she no longer felt sure of being able to control herself. Her own house had all of a sudden become confined and suffocating, as if it were a prison in which she had sat for years: it seemed as if she could bear this way of living no longer.

On one of the following days a neighbour came in with a message from her aunt. She was ill, and wished Elizabeth to come and see her.

Leaving word, accordingly, for Salve when he returned, where she was gone, she took Henrik with her, and set out at once for Arendal. It was almost a relief to think that she would be away this time when he came home.

That old Mother Kirstine should be laid up, was, in its way, an event in the place. Having been professed sick-nurse for so many years, she was connected by ties of grateful recollection with a number of families. Men who were now fathers themselves remembered well her face bending over them when as children they had tossed about in measles or fever; and when any more serious illness now occurred in any of their households, she appeared upon the scene as a matter of course without waiting to be sent for. And it was a comfort in itself to see that strong, self-possessed old woman, with her quiet experienced tact and untiring faculty of keeping awake, moving about the sick-bed, and giving her directions with a confidence that brooked no contradiction. Her position, in fact, was such, that when a new doctor arrived he soon perceived that the first thing he had to do, if he was to have any reputation in the town, would be to win the confidence of old Mother Kirstine.

Young Fru Beck, amongst others, had constantly sent to inquire after her; and when she heard that Elizabeth was there, she could not resist the opportunity of going to see her.

It was one evening before dinner—Mother Kirstine had fallen into a quiet sleep, and Elizabeth was sitting by her bedside, when she saw Fru Beck pass the window. Elizabeth knew she would come in, and sat with beating heart waiting for her knock at the door.

Fru Beck must have stood a long while in the porch, for some minutes passed before the latch was stirred. Elizabeth went softly out and opened the door.

They stood face to face. Elizabeth's eyes were full of tears, but Fru Beck's feelings were not at that moment so easily expressed. She silently pressed Elizabeth's hand, and her manner, and the expression of her pale face, showed that she was not the less moved of the two at their meeting again.



Elizabeth showed her into Mother Kirstine's comfortable little kitchen, where a saucepan of broth for her sick aunt was simmering over the fire. She invited her visitor to take a seat. It was so quiet that they could hear the watch ticking in the next room where her aunt was sleeping.



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Neither spoke for a moment or two. Then Fru Beck asked in a low voice—

“How is your aunt, Elizabeth?”

It was a natural question to ask under the circumstances, but it was felt by both to be only a preliminary breaking of the ice; she had, besides, sent a messenger that morning already to make inquiries.

“Thank you, Fru Beck, she is improving,” Elizabeth replied. “She is asleep now, and that will do her good.”

“It is a long time since we saw each other—nearly eighteen years,” said Fru Beck, and her eyes dwelt upon Elizabeth as if to find what traces time had left upon her. “But you have kept strong, I see—stronger than I have.”

“It was that morning I left for Holland,” said Elizabeth, seeming to recall it with a certain pleasure.

“I have often thought of that time,” whispered Fru Beck, more to herself almost than to the person she was talking to. Her lip trembled slightly, and Elizabeth read an expression of mute sorrow in her face. She was on the point of telling Elizabeth that she knew the reason of her going; but after debating for a moment within herself whether she should or not, finally let it pass.

“Ah! if we could only see into the future, Elizabeth!” she exclaimed with a sigh, and looked sadly at her, as if she thought she had given expression to a feeling that must be common to them both.

“It is better as it is, Fru Beck. Many things happen in life that would not be so easy to bear if we were cast down beforehand.”

“Yes; but one could guard one’s self,” whispered Fru Beck, with a certain bitterness and hardness in her voice.

Elizabeth made no reply, and there was a pause, which seemed to Fru Beck to have broken the thread of the conversation. She deliberated how she should take it up again so as to get at what she wanted to say, and taking Elizabeth’s hand with sudden warmth, she said—

“If there is anything your aunt wants, you know, I hope, that she has only to send to me.” She would rather have made Elizabeth herself the object of her interest instead of her aunt, but felt that there was much in the relations in which they had stood to one another to make that impossible; but her meaning was just as clear.



“And for yourself, Elizabeth?” she went on, looking searchingly into her eyes, with an expression of deep sympathy. “All is not right with you: I am afraid your marriage has not been a happy one.”

These last words brought a sudden flush into Elizabeth’s face, and she involuntarily withdrew her hand.

She looked at Fru Beck with an expression of wounded pride, as if it was a subject she declined to discuss.

“That is not the case, Fru Beck,” she replied. “I am”—she was going to say “happily,” but preferred to say—“not unhappily married.” She felt that that sounded rather weak, and added—

“I have never loved, never wished for, any one but him who is now my husband.”



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“I am overjoyed to hear it, Elizabeth, for I had heard otherwise,” said Fru Beck, with some embarrassment—and there was another pause. She felt from Elizabeth’s manner and bearing that she had wounded her self-esteem; and this last unlucky speech, she was afraid, had made matters worse.

There was a movement in the adjoining room, and Elizabeth was glad of an occasion to break the rather painful silence, and went in to her aunt for a moment.

Fru Beck looked after her with a rather surprised, but an unsatisfied, expression; she must have been mistaken: but still, happy in her home Elizabeth could scarcely be. And yet, she thought bitterly, what a gulf there was between them! She, at all events, loved her husband.

When Elizabeth returned, Fru Beck, with the idea of effacing the impression she had already produced, and to satisfy, at the same time, her own longing to open her heart to somebody, said—

“You must not be offended at what I said, Elizabeth. I thought that others might have sorrow too.”

“We all have our burden, and often it is very hard to bear,” rejoined Elizabeth. She understood very well what Fru Beck’s words had meant, and looked at her compassionately; but she avoided answering directly to what she thought had been blurted out unintentionally, and said—

“You have a son. That should be a great happiness, Fru Beck, and much to live for.”

“To live for!” she exclaimed—“to live for! I will confide to you something that no one but you now knows. I am dying—dying every day. No one knows as well as I do myself how much is left of me. It is little, and it will soon be less.” She spoke in a cold, pale kind of ecstasy. “You are the only creature I have told this to—the only one on this earth I really care about; hear it and forget it. And now, adieu,” she said; “if we ever meet again in this world, don’t let the subject be mentioned between us.” She felt blindly for the door, and opened it.

“Every cross comes from above, and the worst of all sins is to despair,” said Elizabeth, with an attempt at consolation; she said what most readily occurred to her at the moment.

Fru Beck turned at the door, and looked back at her with a white, calm, joyless face.

“Elizabeth,” she said, “I found this in one of my husband’s drawers. I tell it you, that you may not think that that has been in any way the cause of my spoilt life.”



She took from her pocket a scrap of paper, yellow with age, and handed it to her. The door closed behind her then, and she was gone.

Elizabeth sat still for a long while in sad distress, thinking of her. Now she understood why Fru Beck was so pale. She had not a wrinkle in her face—it looked so noble; but oh how cold, how pinched it had become! Poor, poor woman! her burden was indeed a heavy one. It would have been difficult to recognise Marie Forstberg again in her.



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“That, then, it is to have married unhappily,” she said to herself. She seemed to have gazed into some terrible abyss.

Her friend’s sorrows continued to occupy her thoughts as she sat by her aunt’s bedside; and when at last her feelings of compassion had calmed down, another point in their conversation that had been hitherto thrown into the background came into increasing prominence. It lay in the words that had so suddenly and grievously wounded her.

“So, that is what the world says of us,” she thought: “that our marriage has been unhappy.”

She had time and solitude enough, while tending her patient and sitting up with her, to ponder the matter; and as she thought over her married life, and contemplated unflinchingly the constant, weary, fruitless struggle in which it had passed, and in which she had not advanced one single step, but rather had been going always, always back, more and more, she asked herself, could she say that there was happiness in a life like that? And was Salve himself happy? She saw him before her as he was in his early youth, and as he was now—gloomy, savage, and suspicious in his home; she thought how she welcomed him always with disguised dread instead of with a wife’s joy, how they had last parted, and what feelings she had since entertained; and she dwelt long and bitterly upon the contrast. To think that it should have come to this between them! She began with dread to reflect, “Perhaps this is what they mean by an unhappy marriage.” It had never occurred to her before that such a thing could be said of her—of her, who had married the man whom of all others in the whole world she wished to marry.

She sat on far into the night with her hands folded on her knee, and gazing straight before her, the night-light from the glass behind the bed throwing its faint light over the room. Fru Beck’s words, as she stood there so pale, and told her of her unhappiness, recurred to her again and again, more distinctly, it seemed, each time. “I am dying every day. I know best myself how much is left of me. It is very little, and will soon be less.”

It seemed then all in a moment to flash upon her—

“That is just how Salve and I are living. We are wasting away—we are dying every day beside each other. That is what people do who are unhappily married.”

She sat for a long while, with her head bent forward, sorrowfully engrossed with this thought. In all the self-sacrifice she had practised, because she thought he could not bear to hear the truth, she saw now nothing but one long corroding lie. It was owing to the want of confidence in each other, of mutual candour—to their both having shunned the truth, the only sure ground of happiness, that their life together had been thus

spoilt. She threw back her head with a look of wild energy in her face, and never had she looked more handsome than now, as she exclaimed decisively—



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“But there shall be an end of this! Salve and I shall no longer make a desert of each other’s life!” and she rose from her chair in great agitation.

“What are you saying, Elizabeth?” asked her aunt, whom she had unconsciously awakened.

“Nothing, dear aunt,” she answered, and bent over the invalid with a cup of broth, which she had been keeping warm over the night-light.

“You look so—so happy, Elizabeth.”

“It is because you have slept so well, aunt; and if you drink this you will go to sleep again.”

There was a quiet smile on her lips now, and her whole bearing was changed. The burden of years was taken off her heart. At last the chilling, heavy, bewildering fog which had enclosed her whole life, making every footstep, every thought, every joy uncertain, had lifted, and she could clearly see her way.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Salve had been lucky; he had piloted an English bark into Hesnaes, and his services had been liberally acknowledged. He had, as usual, looked forward with dread to coming home again; but when he found his wife not there, and heard the reason, he had set off at once for Arendal to see after her.

She received him out in the passage.

“Good morning, Salve,” she said, shaking hands with him. “I have been anxious about you, as you may suppose, and have been expecting you. You mustn’t make a noise—come this way,” and she showed him into the room at the side. “Where is Gjert?”

He looked at her in surprise; this was not her usual way of receiving him. There was a confidence in her tone, as if she had taken upon herself to call him to account for his absence. It had hitherto been he always who had taken the initiative and been in a gracious humour or not, according as it pleased him.

“Gjert,” he answered, rather shortly, “is at home in the house. So you have been anxious about me—expected me?” he added, in a peculiar tone, as if he found something to remark upon in this way of addressing him, but deferred comment for the present.

“Why, you know, goodman, that it can’t be the same to me if you are lost out there at sea.”



“How is your aunt?” he asked, abruptly. “Is she seriously ill?”

“She can see you. Come in with me, but step gently.”

Salve felt that he could not very well refuse, and followed her. He had always, as far as possible, avoided seeing Mother Kirstine, and had left his wife to represent him in that quarter. He was afraid of the penetrating eyes which the old woman turned upon him, and had never forgotten the warning she had given him not to go near Elizabeth as long as he harboured a doubt against her in his heart.

It was with great deference that he now approached her bedside.

“Oh, it’s you, Salve,” she said, in a weak voice. “It’s not often I have a sight of you. Elizabeth has been such a blessing to me; and Henrik is so quiet and good. Where is Gjert? Have you not brought him with you?” And her eyes wandered in search of the boy.



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“He is at home taking care of the house, aunt. How are you?”

“Oh, thanks—as you see. I think so often what will become of that boy; he is so wild, but with such a good nature, poor fellow!”

“Oh, we shall make something of him, you’ll see,” said Elizabeth, who had been standing behind Salve, and now came forward. “But you must not talk so much.”

Salve’s face grew stern; this was the most unfortunate topic which could have been suggested. And matters were presently made worse by Mother Kirstine saying, when there was a pause—

“You looked so glad last night, Elizabeth! Who was it that was sitting with you talking yesterday?”

“It was Fru Beck.”

“The young one?”

“Yes. But you talk too much, aunt.”

“I am afraid so too,” thought Salve; and as he saw Elizabeth, as if nothing had happened, motioning to him now to come away, he controlled himself for the moment, and said a little constrainedly—

“You will be quite well, aunt, I hope, by the time I come again perhaps in a few days. Good-bye till then.”

He left the room rather brusquely, and his face was black as thunder.

Elizabeth read his thoughts, and when they came out into the kitchen she forestalled him.

“Listen, Salve,” she said; “I must, of course, stay here as long as aunt is ill.”

“Of course,” he replied; “and you have acquaintances here.”

“You mean Fru Beck? Yes, she has been so kind to me, and I am attached to her—she is unhappily married, poor thing!”

Salve was astounded. Elizabeth seemed all in a moment to have forgotten a great deal—to have forgotten that there existed certain stumbling-blocks between them—was it perhaps because she was in her aunt’s house? He looked coldly at her as if he could not quite comprehend what had come over her.



“You will remain, of course, as long as you please,” he said, and prepared to go; but could not help adding with bitterness—

“I daresay you find it lonely and dull at home.”

“You are not so far wrong there, Salve,” she replied. “I have indeed found it lonely enough out there for many years now. You are so often away from home, and then I am left quite alone. It is two years now since I have been in here to see my aunt.”

“Elizabeth,” he burst out, trying hard to restrain himself, “have you taken leave of your senses?”

“That is just what I want to avoid, Salve,” she said, with freezing deliberation.

He stared at her. She could stand and tell him this to his face!

“So these are your sentiments, then,” he observed, scornfully. “I always suspected it; and now, for what I care, you may please yourself about coming home, Elizabeth,” he continued in a cold, indifferent tone.

“You ought always to have known what my sentiments were, Salve; that I was, perhaps, too much attached to you.”



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“I shall send you money. You shall not have that as an excuse. So far as I am concerned, you may enjoy the society of Fru Beck and your fine friends as long as ever you please.”

“And why should I not be allowed to speak to Fru Beck?” she cried, with her head thrown back, and with an expression of rising anger. “You don’t mean, I suppose, that there is anything against me that should prevent my entering her house? But there must be an end to this, Salve—and it is for the sake of our love I say it; for if matters go on as they have been going on so long between us,” she concluded slowly, and with a tremor in her voice, “you might live to see the day when it had ceased to exist. These things are not in our own power, Salve.”

He stood for a moment still, and gazed at her in speechless amazement, while the flash of his dark keen eyes showed that a devil had been roused within him, which he had the utmost difficulty in restraining.

“I will suppose that you have said this in a moment of excitement,” he said, with terrible calmness; “I shall not be angry with you—I shall forget it; I promise you that. And I think that you have not been quite yourself to-day—ill—”

“Don’t deceive yourself, Salve. I mean every word—as surely as I love you.”

“Farewell, Elizabeth; I shall be here again on Wednesday,” he said, as if he only held to his purpose, and did not care to hear any more of this. He left her then, and shut the door quietly behind him.

When he had gone, Elizabeth sank rather than sat down upon the bench. She was frightened at what she had said. A profound dread took possession of her. She knew his nature so well, and knew that she was risking everything, that the result might be that he would leave her altogether, and take to some misguided life far away from home. And yet it must—it must be dared. And with God’s help she would conquer, and bind him to her closer than ever he had been before.

CHAPTER XXIX.

As Salve stood and steered for home, he had as yet only a dull consciousness of what had occurred; but there was anger in his eye, and a hard determined look in his face. His pride had received a terrible shock. She had suddenly fallen upon him with all this on neutral ground; she had told him plainly that she had been unhappy, and that she felt she had been living under a tyranny the whole time of their married life. He smiled bitterly—well, he had been right, it seemed, all along in feeling that she was not open with him.



Yes, it was true that they had lived unhappily; but whose fault had it been? Had she not deceived him when he was young and confiding, and did not know what doubt was? And since?—he knew but too well what it had cost her to adapt herself to his humble circumstances.

He felt that the power which he had had over her for so many years was gone. It was as if she had all of a sudden set down a barrel of gunpowder on the floor of his house and threatened to blow it up. Such threats, however, would have no weight with him.



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When he came to Merdoe he moored the cutter in silence—scarcely looking at Gjert, who came down to help him—and went in, without speaking, to the house, where he stood by the window for a while writing on the window-pane. It was soon quite dark outside; Gjert had lit a candle, and had sat down by the table. He understood that there was something wrong again with his mother, but did not dare to ask after her, as he was longing to do. His father, during the rest of the evening, never stirred from the corner of the bench which was his son's sleeping-place; it was made to serve the double purpose of bench and bed.

When supper-time arrived, Gjert put some food on the table. He felt that the situation somehow was dangerous, and went on his tiptoes to make as little noise as possible; but he was the more awkward in consequence, and made a clatter with the plates.

This, and the dread of him which his son showed, irritated Salve. He flared up suddenly, and burst out in a thundering voice—

“Don't you ask after your mother, boy?”

Gjert would have been frightened under ordinary circumstances, but his anxiety for his mother, for whom his heart bled, gave him courage to answer boldly—

“Yes, father; I have been wanting all the time to ask how mother was. Is she not coming? Poor mother!” and the boy burst into tears, laid his head upon his arm, and sobbed.

“Mother will come back when her aunt over in Arendal is well again,” said the pilot, soothingly. But he soon broke out again.

“You have nothing to blubber for,” he said; “you can go in and see her if you like to-morrow morning the first thing. You may go now and sleep in our bed.”

Gjert obeyed; and his father paced to and fro on the floor afterwards for a long while in great agitation.

“That is her game, then, is it?” he exclaimed. “She knew what she was about, and she knew who it was she was threatening.”

He sat down again on the bench-bed with clasped hands, and eyes fixed on the ground. Passion was working strongly within him.

“But she does not put compulsion upon me.”

The candle was expiring in the socket, and he lit another and put it in its place. It was past midnight. He remained for a little with the candlestick in his hand, and then took



the light in to Gjert. The boy was lying in his mother's place, and had evidently cried himself to sleep.

His father stood for a long while over him. His lips quivered, and his face became ashy pale. He controlled himself with an effort and went back to the other room, where he sat down in the same attitude as before.

When Gjert came in in the morning, he found his father lying down on the bench with all his clothes on. He was asleep. It was evident that he had sat up the whole night. It went to the boy's heart; and he felt sorry for his father now.

The latter woke shortly after and looked at him rather confusedly at first. Then he said, gently—



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"I promised you yesterday, my boy, that you should go to your mother in Arendal. I daresay she is wanting to see you."

"If mother is not ill I had rather stay here with you, father, until you go in to see her yourself. She has Henrik with her."

"You would?" said his father, in a rather toneless voice, and looking at him as if some new idea had been suggested to him by the boy's reply.

"But I wish you to go, Gjert," he said then, suddenly, in a changed tone, that admitted of no further question. "Mother took no things with her. You must take her Sunday gown, and what else you know she will want, in with you in the trunk there. It may be a long while before—before aunt is well," he said, and left the house.

While Gjert packed up the things, his father went down to the strand and got the row-boat ready himself for him.

When the boy started he stroked the child's cheek, but said a little bitterly, "Remember me to your mother now, and say that father is coming, as he promised, on Wednesday. Be careful, now, how you go. I have only given you the oars; I don't like to trust you with a sail in the boat."

He stood for some time looking after his son as he rowed sturdily away, and then went up to the look-out, where he began to walk up and down with his hands behind his back in his usual manner. His restlessness of mind, however, soon drove him back again to the house, where he remained alone nearly the whole day.

The first intensity of his anger had so far worked itself off now, that he could think clearly; and the chief feeling which possessed him was one of wonder as to what could have come over her all of a sudden like this. It could hardly be that scene which they had had when he last went to sea—it had not been the first of its kind. No—it must be something else; it must have been something which had occurred in Arendal. She had spoken of Fru Beck's unhappy married life with a certain significance, as if it bore upon their own. That was evidently it—she had been talking to Fru Beck; she must have been put up to it by her old friend.

"What gratitude I do owe these Becks!" he exclaimed; "it seems as if every trouble must come from that owl's nest."

"She has gone and thought all this at home here, concealing it from me the whole time, submitting, and saying nothing. Now she has found her opportunity. And over there, in Arendal, she could, of course, count upon being able to make her own terms against her husband, the unpopular pilot—could be sure of having every one on her side, from her aunt to these same Becks."



Yes; and what was the real history of her connection with the Becks? He had never had that matter satisfactorily cleared up.

“She stipulated that I should trust her—wouldn’t hear mention of a doubt. But I have never felt satisfied about that business.”

“I’ll not be fooled by you any longer,” he cried then, flying into a sudden passion, and striding up and down the room. “It is she who must give me an explanation; it is she who has trampled me under foot!”



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He sat down at the table and pursued this train of thought.

“Elizabeth! Elizabeth! what have you done?” he whispered, presently, with emotion, and hid his forehead in his hands.

“Yes, what has she done? Nothing, I firmly believe; and that it is just you, Salve, who are mad! Ah! if I could only really believe that there was nothing to quarrel about, after all! And I can believe it, if I have only been with her for a while,” he sighed; and then added with a touch of self-contempt, “the fact is, I ought never to go away from home. I am like an anchovy; I don’t bear taking out of the jar!”

“She was so like the old Elizabeth as she stood there and told me all this; it is years since I have seen her like that. There’s not her match to be found the whole world through.

“She has told me so often that she cares for me, has always cared for me, ever since the time she was living with her grandfather out on the rock; and an untruth never came from her lips. I’d stake my life upon that.

“For truth—I believe you, Elizabeth, when you stand like that and tell me so,” and he struck the table as if he was making the declaration to her face.

“But why should she care for me?” he went on. “Have her thoughts not been running always on things much beyond what I, a poor pilot, and my humble cottage can give her? Has she not always been hankering after something grand?”

During these days, while this conflict of thought was surging to and fro within him, he had the appearance of a man distraught; and if he ever left the house, he could not rest until he had returned to it again. The prolonged agitation of mind had told upon him, and he was sitting now—the day before the one when he was to go in to Arendal again—alone in his house, feeling very low and depressed; it looked so dreary and empty.

Over in the window, by the leaf-table, where she generally sat to sew, stood the polished buffalo-hoof which he had brought long ago as a curiosity from Monte Video, and had since had made into a weight for her; and by the wall, under the old print of the Naiad, was the elephant, carved out of bone, which he had also had from the time when he was roaming through the world as a sailor before the mast.

He gazed at these things for a while absently, and then went in to their bedroom.

There was the chest of drawers by the wall, on which she always placed the lacquered glass which hung in the other room, when she arranged her beautiful hair. How many a conversation they had had together as she stood there with her back to him; and what a figure she had! often answering him with merely a change of expression as she looked back at him over her shoulder. Everything in the room had some such vivid memory to



suggest; and as he sat dismally on the side of their bed, adjoining which was little Henrik's, his thoughts were occupied with many a trivial recollection of the kind, which might seem almost childish in a man of his age and character, and of such a stern, black-bearded exterior; but he was anything but stern now.



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Presently his eyes ceased to wander. He sat perfectly still. The conviction had seized him that he could not possibly do without her; and as he looked slowly about him a great terror seemed to be taking possession of him. He imagined that she was really gone—that in some way or another he had really lost her, and that everything in the room was standing just as she had left it, and as it would stand unmoved, undusted for ever.

“I have deserved it,” he muttered; and a cold perspiration came out upon his forehead. “Have I treated her in such a way that I have any right to expect her to care for me? Is it not just my own folly that is to blame? She was right—more than right. I have behaved shamefully to her, suspiciously, and tyrannically—invariably, unceasingly; and now I may sit here long enough and repent it, to no purpose. She would not be what she is if she tamely submitted to such treatment.”

He dwelt upon this last thought until the scales seemed to drop from his eyes, and, acknowledging the truth at last, he broke out with bitter scorn against himself—

“The fact is, in my cursed pride I have never been able to bear the thought that she might have been better off—that I was not good enough for her, not fit for her; that is what has been at the bottom of it all: and as I would not acknowledge that, I have insisted always to myself that I could not trust her.

“Do I really believe this?” he asked himself then slowly, and fell into thought again, his face growing darker and darker every minute.

“What a good-natured booby, fool, idiot, I am!” he cried, with a scornful laugh. “No, it is she who has been false and untruthful, she who must acknowledge it, she who is bound to give me, once for all, full explanation. Yes, it is she who must bend, and then she may have some claim to hear from me what I too may have to reproach myself for in my acts or bearing towards her. That is how it is, and that is how it shall be!”

A hard, inexorable look overspread his face as he said this; but for a moment he appeared almost moved again—

“I shall speak kindly to her—be so gentle—forget everything.

“But bend she shall,” he added; and that decision was evidently final.

CHAPTER XXX.

That evening was passed by Elizabeth in a terrible struggle with herself. When Gjert had brought her clothes she had turned very pale, and had felt as if she had undertaken what she would not have strength to carry through. And now that the decisive moment had nearly come, this feeling increased almost to despair.



They had all gone to bed in the house. It was so quiet about her; and a feeling came over her such as she had experienced that time on the Apollo, as she sat and waited whilst they approached the sandbanks. Early next morning the crisis would inevitably come; and it was a question now of losing more than the brig—of losing all they jointly possessed on earth! She saw a long, dreary life-strand stretching away beyond.



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This time it was she who was at the helm, and steering a desperate course—to save her love. A solemn look came over her face. The prayer for seamen in danger, which she had so often used when the gusts were shaking the house out there on Merdoe, and she sat waiting for him in her solitary home, came into her head now—the prayer that God might save him from a sudden death.

A sudden death!

If he really had been lost on one of those many occasions when he had parted from her with bitterness and anger in his heart! Would her love then have been a blessing to him?

“No, Salve!” she cried; “you shall not have me to thank for such a life in your last hour!”

In the night she awoke with a scream. She had dreamt that Salve was going to leave her for ever, and she cried frantically after him, “Salve! Salve!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

His two sons were waiting for him when the pilot came up to the jetty next morning. Little Henrik had begun to shout to him gleefully while he was still some way off; but Gjert was quiet. He had seen enough to feel that there must be something serious the matter between his parents, and he was depressed.

“Good morning, boys!” said their father, kindly; “how is your—aunt?”

“Better,” replied Gjert.

“She sleeps in the daytime, too,” added the “bagman,” triumphantly—he had discovered that this was what was required to make her well again. He then threw his cap down on the stones with a great sailor air, and with an eager “hale-hoi—o—ohoi!” began to haul in the shore-rope which his father had thrown, while Gjert, paying no attention whatever to his brother’s efforts, made it fast to the mooring-ring.

“That’s good lads! Stay here now, both of you, by the boat, and look after her till I come back,” said their father. “See, Gjert, that Henrik doesn’t leave the quay.”

He left them then, and went rapidly up the street.

Elizabeth was standing by the hearth expecting him; and something of a Sunday calm seemed to have come over her as she stood there. She heard him out in the passage; and when he entered, a rapid flush passed over her fine features, but it disappeared again immediately, and she stared at him with half-open lips, forgetting to greet him. At

the same time, there was a conscious self-possession in her bearing which did not escape him. That was the Elizabeth he loved.

He came to the point at once; and looking her full in the face, began with great earnestness—"Elizabeth, I have a serious accusation to make against you. You have not been frank towards me—you have disguised your real feelings from me for many years, I am afraid during the whole time we have lived together."

He spoke gently, and as though he had no desire to press the charge, but merely waited to hear her make a full acknowledgment before he forgave her. She stood, however, without raising her eyes from the ground, her face pale, and her bosom heaving.



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“And yet how I have loved you, Elizabeth!—more dearly than my life,” he added.

She still remained for a moment silent, and had to summon all her courage now to speak. At last she said, in a rather strained voice, and without lifting her eyes—

“I hear you say it, Salve. But I have been thinking a good deal lately.”

“You have been thinking, Elizabeth?” he repeated, “what have you been thinking?” and his expression changed in a moment to the dark, stern one she knew so well. He had made his advance; further he would not go.

“Am I right, or am I not?” he asked, sharply.

“No, Salve, you are not right,” she replied, turning to him now with a look that seemed fired by all she had endured; “you are not right. It is yourself, and yourself only, you have loved all along; and when you took me as your wife, you merely took another to help you. There were two about it then, and even so it was not enough. No! no!” she cried, striking out her hand with an emphatic gesture in the bitterness of her feeling—“if you had loved me as I have loved you, we would not be standing before one another as we are this day!”

He was taken aback for a moment by this unexpected outburst, but replied in a cold hard voice, while his eyes never moved from her face, “I thank you, Elizabeth, for having at last told me your thoughts, though it comes a little late. You see I was right when I said that you had not been frank towards me.”

“I have not been frank with you, you say? Yes, that is true,” she rejoined, while her eye met his unflinchingly. “And it is to my honour. I have submitted to be an object of suspicion in my own house. I have shut my eyes and persisted in believing that you cared for me, in spite of the heavier burden which you were every day imposing upon me—in spite of all that I have had to endure—and it has been much, very much, Salve, —and I have done all this because I believed it was my duty, and because I thought you could not bear to hear the truth, and because I hoped that I might conquer in the end, and make you really love me as I have all along, and but too well, loved you, Salve. It is true that I have not been frank with you. And, I repeat, it is to my honour.”

This interpretation of their relations together was not one which he chose to accept, and he rejoined in the same hard tone as before—

“However cleverly you may have tried to conceal it, Elizabeth, it has always been but too evident to me what you have endured in trying to accommodate yourself to the humble circumstances of a man like me. I know as well as you that a common seaman was little suited to be your husband—I have always known it from the time we were first engaged, when we stood before Van Spycck’s portrait in Amsterdam. That was the sort



of man, I knew very well, whom you ought to have had for a husband. I saw it again, as I have seen it always, when you made comparisons between the North Star and my poor brig—”



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“Salve!” she exclaimed, passionately, unable to control herself any longer—“what rubbish are you talking? Do you not know perfectly well that if you had been an admiral yourself you never would have been greater in my eyes than you are now, and always have been as a simple pilot? And pray, whom was I thinking of when I was looking at Van Spyck? why, of whom but of you?—thinking that the man called Salve Kristiansen, who stood behind me, was just the one to have done what Van Spyck did. Or when I was admiring the North Star was I not thinking then too: If you, Salve, were in command of her, they would see what she could really do with a proper man on board? What possible interest do you suppose I could have in the North Star, except in connection with you? Were not you, poor skipper of the Apollo, worth more, a thousand times more to me, than a hundred North Stars with all their bravery?”

When she spoke like this it was impossible not to believe every single word of what she said, and Salve’s expression while she had been speaking had gradually changed to one of inexpressible happiness. So it was really he, and he alone, who had been the hero of her life! and he stretched out his arms to her, as though, like Alcibiades of old, he would end the discussion by clasping her to his heart and carrying her straight off with him to his home. But he was arrested by the deep repelling seriousness with which she continued—

“No, Salve!—it is not which that stands between us, however ingeniously you may have discovered it—it is not that,—it is something else. It is that you don’t trust me in your heart; that is the truth—and that has been the real source of all these morbid ideas you have formed.

“And look you,” she went on, with wild anguish in her voice, “we shall never get on together as long as you encourage the faintest suspicion of such thoughts; we shall never have peace beside our hearth—that peace that I have been striving for all these years, when I have been submitting, as I did, to everything—in a way that you know well, Salve, was very far from natural to me,” and as she said this she looked with a magnificent air at him; “and if you cannot yet understand that—may God help you—and us!” she ended in despair, and turning half away again to the fire, stared dejectedly into it.

He stood before her half-averted form as if he had been paralysed, and scarcely dared to look up at her, with such truth had all that she had said come home to him. She had held a mirror up to their life together, and he saw himself in it so utterly selfish and so small by the side of all this love. He was profoundly pained and humbled, and was too naturally truthful to wish not to acknowledge it.

He went absently to the window and stood there for a moment.



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“Elizabeth,” he said then, despondently, turning round, “you still must know in your heart that you have been everything in this world to me. But I know where my great fault to you has been, and I’ll tell it you now, fully and freely, even if you must despise me for it. Yes, Elizabeth, it is true I have never been able to feel absolutely certain that I had full possession of your heart—though, God be praised, you have taught me differently today—since that time,”—it evidently cost him a struggle to go on with the humiliating confession—“since that business between you and the lieutenant. That has been the thorn in my flesh,” he said, gently, as if opening his inmost heart to her, “which I have not been able to get rid of, in spite of my better reason. And I don’t know but what it may still be there. There lies my weakness—I tell it you plainly and honestly; but at the same time I can’t give you up, Elizabeth.

“I have always seen,” he continued, “that the proper husband for you would have been a man who was something in the world—such a one as he, and not a man of no position like me. In my pride I never could bear the thought—and it is that that has made me so full of rancour against all the world, and so suspicious and bad towards you. I have not been strong enough—not like you—but I can truly say I have struggled with my weakness, Elizabeth,” he said, pale with intensity of feeling, and laying both his hands on her shoulders, and looking into her face.

She felt that his arms were trembling, and her eyes filled with tears—it went to her heart to see him like this. All at once on a sudden thought she withdrew herself from his hands and went into the little room adjoining the one they were in, and opened a drawer there. She came out with the old note in her hand and held it out to him—

“That is the letter I wrote to the lieutenant the night I left the Becks’.”

He looked at her a little wonderingly.

“Fru Beck gave it to me,” she said. “Read it, Salve.”

He looked at the large clumsy writing and spelt out—

“Forgive me that I cannot be your wife, for my heart is given to another.—Elizabeth Raklev.”

He sat down on the bench and read it over again, while she bent over him, looking now at the writing, and now at his face.

“What do you find there, Salve?” she asked. “Why could I not be Beck’s wife?”

““Because my heart is given to another,”” he answered, slowly, and looking up at her with moistened eyes.

“Not yours; it is I who loved another. And who was that other?”



“God bless you—it was me!” he said, and drew her down upon his knee into a long, long embrace.

* * * * *

The boys had become tired of waiting down at the boat, the “bagman” especially, since it was clearly past dinner-time; the bell had rung over at the dry-dock, and the town boys had already passed from school. His white head and heated face appeared now at the kitchen-door, and with scarcely a glance over to where his father and mother were sitting on the bench together looking very happy, he turned at once to the hearth and became aware of the sad fact that there was positively no porridge to be seen; there was not even a fire. Coming bodily into the room, he asked, with tears in his voice—



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“Have you had dinner? Are Gjert and I not to have any, then?”

His mother sprang up. “And aunt!” she exclaimed. “I declare it is half-past one, and no dinner put down!” Henrik was glad to find that the worst danger was over.

Mother Kirstine had conjectured that there must be something particular going on between the pair in the kitchen, and that was the reason she had not called Elizabeth. When the latter now came in, she looked at her inquiringly, and asked if anything had happened.

“The happiest thing of my whole life, aunt,” said Elizabeth, coming over to the bed and embracing her impetuously. She hurried back then to her business in the kitchen.

The old woman looked after her, and nodded her head a couple of times slowly, thoughtfully. “No—so?”

“He is joking with little Henrik,” she said then to herself. “That is wonderful: I have never heard him laugh before.”

When they went to dinner in the kitchen Salve left them—he was not hungry—and came in to her. He had a great deal to say, and was a long while away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was an afternoon in the following winter in the pilot’s home. His wife was expecting him, and kept looking uneasily out of the window. He was to have been home by noon, and it was now beginning to get dark; and the weather had been stormy the whole of the previous day.

She gave up sewing, and sat thinking in the twilight, with the light playing over the floor from the door of the stove, where a little kettle was boiling, that she might have something warm ready for him at once when he came. It was too early to light a candle.

Gjert was at school in Arendal, living at his aunt’s; and Henrik was sitting by the light from the stove, cutting up a piece of wood into shavings.

“It is beginning to blow again, Henrik,” she said, and put a handkerchief round her head to look out.

“It is no use, mother,” he pronounced, without stirring, and splitting a long peg into two against his chest; “it’s pitch-dark, isn’t it?” So she gave it up again before she got to the door, but stood and listened; she thought she had heard a shout outside.



“He is coming!” she cried, suddenly, and darted out; and when Salve entered the porch from the sleet squall that had just come up, with his sou’wester and oilskin coat all dripping, he found himself, all wet as he was, suddenly encircled in the dark by a pair of loving arms.

“How long you have been!” she cried, taking from him what he had in his hands, and preceding him into the house, where she lit a candle. “What has kept you? I heard that you had taken a galliot up to Arendal yesterday, and thought you would have been here this morning. It was dreadful weather yesterday, Salve; so I was a little anxious,” she continued, as she helped him off with his wet oilskin coverings.



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"I have done well, Elizabeth," he said, looking pleased.

"On the galliot?"

"Yes, and I had a little matter to arrange in Arendal, which kept me there till after midday."

"You saw Gjert, then?"

"I did." He looked a little impatiently towards the door.

"And he is well?"

"He can tell you now, himself," was the reply, as the door at the moment opened and Gjert entered with a loud "Good evening, mother!"

She sprang towards him in astonishment, and threw her arms round him. "And not a dry stitch on the whole boy!" she cried, with motherly concern.

"But, Salve dear, what is the meaning of this? How can the boy come away from school?"

"When we have changed our clothes and warmed ourselves a little, I'll tell you, mother," answered the pilot, silyly. "He will be at home with you the whole week."

Gjert was evidently ready to burst with some news or other, but he had to restrain himself until his father had taken his seat by the fire that was crackling brightly on the hearth in the kitchen, and had leisurely filled his pipe, and taken two or three pulls at it.

"Now then, Gjert," he said, "you may tell it. I see you can't keep it in any longer."

"Well, mother!" he exclaimed, "father says that I shall be an officer in the navy; and so he has taken me from school and is going with me to Frederiksvoern next week."

Henrik's mouth opened slowly, while Elizabeth, who was stirring the porridge, suspended that operation, and looked in something like alarm at her husband.

"What do you mean, Salve?"

"Wouldn't it be a fine thing, don't you think, to see the boy come home to you some day in a smart uniform, Elizabeth? You have always had a turn for that sort of thing," he added, jokingly. "And since you couldn't go in for it yourself,—as they don't take womenfolk in the navy—and it was not much in my line either,—why, I thought we could make the experiment with Gjert."



“Are you really in earnest, Salve?” she asked, looking at him still in suspense.

He nodded in confirmation.

“Well, if it is your father’s wish, may—may God prosper you in it, my boy!” she said, going over to Gjert and stroking his forehead.

“So—now you may take your joiner’s bench into the room again, Henrik; you can talk with Gjert in there—that is to say, if he will condescend now to answer a common man like you—tell him you will be a merchant captain, and earn as much as two such fellows in uniform. Mother and I can then enjoy a little peace from you here in the kitchen.”

When they were alone, Elizabeth asked—

“But how has it all happened, Salve?”

“Well, you see, I had taken the idea into my head about Gjert that he should become something a little better than his father had been, and so I went up to the Master, to Beck, and asked what I must do to push the thing. Yes; and I spoke to young Fru Beck too.”



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“Salve! did you go to Beck?”

“Yes, I did—the boy must be pushed; and into the bargain, I half begged his pardon for the way I used to turn the rough edge of my tongue on him—and so we were reconciled. He is a fine old fellow in reality, and I have wronged him. He said he had never forgotten that I had saved the Juno for him, and that he had intended to put me one day in command of her. While we were talking, young Fru Beck came in, and when she heard what we were speaking about, she showed the greatest interest at once. You were an old friend of hers, she said; and she thought we might get Gjert into the Institute there free, when he had been up for an examination in the summer. She knew some of the officials who would be able to get it done; and if the Master wrote,” he continued, a little consciously, “that I was neither more nor less than a remarkable pilot who ought to be salaried by the State, the thing would be as good as done. So the Master wrote the application for me there and then.”

“See that!” cried Elizabeth.

“Ay, and he wrote a testimonial from himself underneath. I hadn’t an idea that I was such a fine fellow,” he laughed.

“You see,” she cried, looking at him proudly, “it comes at last. He acknowledges it now.”

“Well, if we don’t manage the thing that way, Salve Kristiansen will be able nevertheless to work it out of his own pocket—for worked it shall be, mind you. It won’t be done for nothing; but we have something in the savings bank, and the rest will come right enough.

“It will be just as well that I should have something to drive me out of the house occasionally, for otherwise I should get too fond both of it and of you, Elizabeth,” he said, and drew her towards him. “I must have a little rain and storm now and again—it’s my nature, you know. And the Master must not be made to have written lies about me.”

His wife looked at him. A glow of deep feeling overspread her handsome features.

“How happy we have become, Salve!” she exclaimed. “If it could only have been like this from the very beginning!”

“I have thought over that, Elizabeth,” he said, seriously. “There has been One at the helm who is cleverer than I, for there was a deal of bad stuff to be knocked out of me after I returned from that foreign life. You, poor woman, were the chief sufferer by it, I am afraid.”

“And it was I, Salve, who was the chief cause of it all,” she replied.